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MIDDLEBURY MEETS CHATGPT

Faculty, students navigate what AI means for learning

By TONY SJODIN
Managing Editor

"Middlebury College is grappling with the implications of the AI tool ChatGPT for academic integrity, offering workshops for faculty to learn about the tool and decide whether to embrace it in redesigned assignments or add policies banning it to their course syllabi." That's the response ChatGPT provided when prompted to "write a one-sentence summary for this article."

Its first obstacle in creating that summary was the article word count — ChatGPT currently only accepts 500-word inputs. Then it directly copied phrases from the article without alterations. But what it ultimately produced seemed both accurate and compelling, epitomizing the challenge that the new AI tool poses for the world of academia.

ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence tool trained on text data and human reinforcement, can generate conversational responses to a range of requests like this. It can answer essay-like questions about historical events, suggest solutions to coding problems or draft a reply to an email. Released to the public in November 2022 by AI research company OpenAI, ChatGPT exploded to a record-setting 100 million active users in just two months.

On college campuses, ChatGPT's sudden debut confronted faculty with a tool that seems to be simultaneously the future of technology and an inexhaustible cheating machine. Few colleges and universities have banned the tool, but several major K-12 school districts have restricted access to the site on school networks, citing concerns about plagiarism and inaccurate information.

Planning for a semester with ChatGPT

At Middlebury, some professors started to address ChatGPT during J-Term. As the spring semester neared and the tool grew in popularity, however, more faculty members started considering what ChatGPT meant for their courses. They approached the new tool in a variety of ways — some embraced AI by redesigning assignments while others added policies banning ChatGPT to their course syllabi.

"There were a number of faculty saying, 'I want to ban it. I don't want this in my class. It either threatens the integrity of the work that I expect students to do, or I'm just not kind of ready to understand its use in my class,'" said Associate Provost for Digital Learning Amy Collier, who was involved in organizing workshops on ChatGPT for faculty. "And within that context, we talk about things like, what does it look like to ban it?"

These workshops — run jointly by the Office of Digital and Learning Inquiry (DLINQ), the Center for Teaching, Learning and Research (CTLR) and the Writing and Rhetoric Program — were offered as a resource for faculty to learn about the tool and explore the implications of generative AI for their teaching. The first was held in late January and the second in late February, with plans for more during the spring semester. DLINQ also offers one-on-one consultations for faculty to discuss their expectations and visions for technology in the classroom, including ChatGPT.

Middlebury has not implemented an institution-wide policy on the use of ChatGPT or other AI tools, instead leaving the question of permission or prohibition up to individual professors. The college handbook mandates that the honor system is reviewed at least

once every four years, and ChatGPT may be a topic of discussion in future reviews.

"Right now, we are in a moment of learning about ChatGPT, and more broadly, the potential pitfalls of AI and academic work," said Jim Ralph, interim vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty. "After reflection and discovery we will have to see if we are going to make any adjustments. I would think that we would do so only very deliberately,

Continued on Page 2

SPORTS

Middlebury women's hockey team to return to NCAA Tournament

COURTESY OF WILL COSTELLO
Members of the women's hockey team celebrate during their 4–0 win over Connecticut College in the NESCAC playoffs.

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

The Middlebury women's hockey team earned one of the four at-large bids to the NCAA Division III Championships, marking the third straight season that the team has made it to the tournament.

The team hosted Suffolk University on Wednesday at Chip Kenyon '85 Arena in the newly expanded 11 team Division III Tournament. Results were not in by press time, but the game's winner will go on to play Plattsburgh State on March 11.

Middlebury made it to the tournament after another stellar season in the ultra competitive NESCAC, going 16–7–3. The team briefly saw success in the NESCAC playoffs, beating Connecticut College 4–0 in the quarter finals. Middlebury's win over Connecticut College was the team's 700th win in program history and featured contributions from countless players. Notably, Jenna Letterie '22.5 registered three assists.

However, the team's quest to defend their NESCAC title fell short after the Panthers lost to Amherst, the No. 4 ranked team in the country, 2–0 in the NESCAC semifinals on March 3. The game between the two NESCAC juggernauts — Amherst last won the NESCAC Championship in 2020 — was competitive, but Middlebury could not find an answer for the pair of goals Amherst scored in the second period. Sabrina Kim '25 and Letterie both had goal scoring opportunities in the third period, but the Amherst goalie made two great saves to keep Middlebury from scoring.

Despite a premature playoff exit, the women's hockey team have much to celebrate in their dominant performance this season and their entry into the Division III National Tournament. In the NESCAC, the team scored the third highest average goals per game, won the second highest percentage of face-offs and had the most successful power play in the league.

Individually, countless players also had great seasons. Letterie led the NESCAC in assists with 17, was third in the league in points with 26 and had the second best faceoff win percentage at 0.642. Britt Nawrocki '26 played a prolific rookie year, leading the team in goals scored with 14, good enough for fourth overall in the NESCAC. Nawrocki's goals were also clutch, as she finished second in the NESCAC in game winning goals with six and third in the NESCAC for power play goals with five. Claudia Vira '23 stood out as an imposing defensive presence, leading the NESCAC in blocked shots with 48; the next highest total for blocked shots was 30.

The team's continued success in the NESCAC is a testament to the enduring strength of the program that Head Coach Bill Mandigo has built. Mandigo, who has four NCAA Championships, 11 NESCAC Championships and the most wins of any women's hockey coach across all divisions, has seen his program continue to excel in recent years. Middlebury is the only NESCAC team to be in the NCAA tournament for each of the last three seasons and is one of only four teams across the country to make the tournament during that same time period. Middlebury women's hockey continues to show that it is a powerhouse in Division III.

No more Nutella: Dining halls respond to inflation, environmental concerns

By BEN WAGNER
Staff Writer

Many students eating at Middlebury's dining halls over the past few weeks have noticed changes in the availability of some meal-time offerings, including Nutella and weekend-morning smoked salmon. Though some students speculated about budget cuts, the real reason some items have disappeared from serveries across campus is inflation.

"We have never seen prices jump as quickly as they have this past year," wrote Dan Detora, director of dining services, in an email to The Campus.

U.S. inflation has hit 5.4% year-over-year and 0.6% month-over-month, according to reporting from the Associated Press, and Middlebury's Dining Services department has not been spared. The college's food costs have risen in recent months, and according to Detora, individual items increased in price anywhere from 7–30%.

"We are looking for ways to lower our food costs in a manner that has the smallest effect on student satisfaction," Detora said.

Detora expressed a hope that although food prices will stay elevated, the rate of increase will fall back to the normal level of around 3% per year.

"We are not hitting the food budget by a substantial amount due to the increases in prices," he noted.

For the 2022–23 academic year, the cost of on-campus housing and the meal plan (a combined charge) at Middlebury was $17,800 while it has been set at $18,600 for the 2023–24 academic year. The change represents a 4.5% increase, which still lags behind inflation.

According to Detora, salmon will return to one of the dining halls each weekend morning, in a return to the pre-Covid-19 menu.

As for Nutella, the reason for its disappearance extends beyond cost concerns.

"We have multiple issues with procurement due to a hazelnut shortage, but more importantly we removed [it] due to environmental and sustainability concerns based on the palm oil that is used to make it," Detora said.

According to reporting from Business Insider, the world is currently facing hazelnut scarcity and higher prices — which has led to increasing Nutella prices — as a ramification of the financial crisis in Turkey, which produces 70% of the world's supply. The nation's currency crisis has made fertilizers and seeds more expensive for farmers, which has caused both lower overall production and higher production costs — and increased scarcity in the market.

Increased demands for palm oil, the ingredient that makes up around 32% of Nutella, according to The Guardian, has caused severe deforestation in tropical regions as forests are cleared to increase plantation acreage.

Limiting the consumption of Nutella, and thus the support of the palm oil industry, appears to be in line with the college's sustainability goals.

"Our goal is to provide the highest quality and best tasting food to our students as well as to create a dining experience that engages with our community and our environment," according to the Middlebury College Dining Services website. The college has worked to meet its food-related sustainability goals by spending 32% of its food budget locally and composting over 300 tons of food.

There's still good news for chocolate-hazelnut lovers, though. Detora may have a solution on the way.

"We are experimenting now with making our own [Nutella], and we hope to provide something soon," he told The Campus.

NEWS

Could a student-run bar be coming to campus?
By HANNAH SAYRE

Rep. Sean Casten '93 speaks on climate change in latest installment of Global Sustainability Speaker Series
By MAYA MILLNER

▶ PAGE 2

LOCAL

In pictures and in words, Meg Madden brings mycology to Middlebury
By RUBY NEUSTADT

Gather on the Green: Middlebury's new community living room
By BRIAN MEJIA

▶ PAGE 4

OPINIONS

AI chatbots are changing Middlebury's academic landscape. How should we respond?
By EDITORIAL BOARD

Take a bite: A love letter to my body
By RACH PECK

▶ PAGE 6

ARTS & CULTURE

New museum exhibit showcases African photography
By GAGE SHRIER

American history through five guitars
By JOSHUA GLUCKSMAN

▶ PAGE 9

SPORTS

Baseball kicks off season with trip to Alabama
By ETHAN VASHEL

Middlebury football welcomes new leadership
By SARAH FURTADO

▶ PAGE 12

Rep. Sean Casten '93 speaks on climate change in latest installment of Global Sustainability Speaker Series

By MAYA MILLNER
Contributing Writer

Middlebury alum and member of the House of Representatives Sean Casten '93 (IL-06) spoke to students via Zoom on March 6 as a part of the Global Sustainability Alums Speaker Series. Casten's talk, titled "A Big Step Forward on Climate; Many More Needed" is the second installment in the series co-sponsored by Franklin Environmental Center at Hillcrest, Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs, Climate Action Capacity Project and the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI).

Casten graduated from Middlebury in 1993 with a Bachelor of Arts in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry. He then worked on cancer research for two years at Tufts University School of Medicine before earning a Master of Engineering Management and a Master of Science in Biochemical Engineering from the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College. In 2019 Casten left his work in the private sector to serve Illinois' 6th Congressional District as the next step in his life's mission to fight climate change.

The lecture kicked off with moderators Mariia Dzholos '24 and Jack Torpey '24 asking Casten to speak on his experience at Middlebury.

"There's something completely magical about Middlebury... Those relationships last a lifetime," Casten said.

Casten then reflected on his professional and political experiences and his work to combat climate change, specifically focusing on energy efficiency. He spoke about his strong belief that the U.S. must take the lead in moving the world towards a sustainable future. He believes the first step is a U.S. energy policy that focuses on productivity and has its own governmental agency.

"If we can decouple economic growth from energy use, that's the whole game," Casten said.

He is concerned by the current state of carbon emissions, explaining that 50% of all the carbon dioxide humans have ever released since the first humans made fire has been emitted since he graduated from Middlebury.

When asked who he looks to for climate action inspiration, Casten first mentioned former Vice President Al Gore because of his profound understanding of the severity of climate change. He then praised Greta Thunberg's work, saying that she presents a perfect example of how youth activism should be done. Casten explained that Thunberg does not claim to know more than she does about climate science and that, instead of asking politicians to listen to her, she implores them to listen to the scientific reports produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Tony Sjodin/The Middlebury Campus
House of Representatives Sean Casten '93 (IL-06) spoke to students via Zoom on his work to combat climate change

The moderated part of the lecture was followed by a question and answer portion. In it, Casten discussed the unfortunate unreliability of carbon credits and the realities of environmental justice.

Casten left students with what he believes to be the key in making an impact in the fight against climate change. "Leverage, leverage, leverage," he said. "Make a difference and lever it up."

Editor's Note: Jack Torpey '24 is an Arts & Culture Editor for The Campus. He was not involved in the editing of this article.

MIDDLEBURY MEETS CHATGPT: Faculty, students navigate what AI means for learning

Continued from Page 1

and at this moment, I don't see a compelling reason to do so, in terms of a broader college policy being issued this semester."

Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric Héctor Vila, who also helped organize the faculty workshops on ChatGPT, said that the tool's introduction was a concerning moment for many educators.

"When ChatGPT became available to the public, really the first people in a kind of shock were teachers and academics," Vila said. "Like, 'oh no, all the students are going to cheat, there goes the essay, what are we going to do?'"

After that initial shock, DLINQ, CTLR and the Writing and Rhetoric program put together the first faculty workshop to start working on the questions that professors were raising about the future of ChatGPT in their classrooms.

"It was like, 'This Is the end of times,' or 'what do I do about it?'" Vila said.

Embracing ChatGPT — and transparency

Vila noted that many faculty — including himself — did not see ChatGPT as wholly threatening to their work. For faculty members who want to limit its use, there are tools like GPTZero, which scans text and calculates the probability that the text was written using AI.

Other professors added policies that required students to disclose when and how they used ChatGPT without outright banning it. Vila created an assignment where students write on their own, and then compare it to what ChatGPT outputs.

"I told them, if you find a line or even have a whole paragraph that's better than yours, go ahead and put it in your essay, but cite it ChatGPT," Vila said. "But then I asked for a little bit extra for them — that at the end of their essays, they write a little reflection of what it was like working with this AI. Was it a challenge, or did they find the writing helpful? Where do they see themselves working with this tool?"

Associate Professor of Political Science Sebnem Gumuscu also said that she did not ban ChatGPT, but rather asked for transparency from students. However, she noted that the writing ChatGPT produces falls short of the quality of work that Middlebury expects from its students.

"This is good from a writing point of view — it is structured well, there are good sentences there," Gumuscu said, referring to a writing sample produced by ChatGPT. "But then you think about the substance. It's really weak. Shallow. Stale. And it's superficial, boring, not creative. Clearly not human."

Other limitations, like the fact that ChatGPT is not trained on data from after September 2021, means that it is not useful for content on all assignments. Gumuscu, who assigns op-ed style writing assignments on current events, said that when she prompted it to write about the February 2023 earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, it responded with information about the 2020 earthquakes in the region instead.

Reimagining coursework

Many professors saw ChatGPT as an opportunity to reevaluate how students are assessed. Some adjusted assignments to formats that make using ChatGPT more difficult, such as reintroducing written exams or changing exam content.

"We've been thinking about doing this for a while, but it kind of helped bring an additional incentive to shift the exams to being less multiple choice to more applying concepts to different scenarios," said Assistant Professor of Biology Eric Moody, who is teaching a section of Ecology and Evolution (BIOL 0140) this semester. "Not only do we think it helps emphasize the learning goals better, but it also prevents students just typing in something to ChatGPT and potentially getting an answer."

Collier said that one of the opportunities of education is the continuous process of refining what learning and demonstrating learning means.

"ChatGPT is creating tension around that. The things that we come to expect students to produce to show their learning are things where ChatGPT could play a role right now," Collier said.

Moody and Associate Professor of Geography Jeff Howarth both noted that they teach classes with significant coding components that are not the main focus of the subject, and ChatGPT could allow students to focus more on the central questions rather than building the tools to evaluate them.

"If we got to the point where I didn't have to teach them the code, but they could put in a natural language expression and you could make software without having to code — yeah, I think I would be okay with that," Howarth said. "Because that would just shift me to like, looking at the application."

"I actually think it's helpful because I don't test students on their ability to write the code, and in fact, learning how to write it is one of the biggest struggles in my class," Moody said.

Faculty are not alone in their varied approaches to ChatGPT — students, too, have been navigating the role of the new AI tool in their lives.

Tim Hua '23 said he used ChatGPT for coding in R, a programming language typically used for statistical computing, and was impressed by its rapid and accurate output. Functions that could take significant time to figure out independently were easily generated by ChatGPT.

"It's like, oh, I just spent 40 minutes making that function myself," Hua said. "So that's really convenient."

Hua described the chatbot like having a tutor, because it helps provide answers and can explain why the code works.

"I think of it, at least right now, like having somebody who's really experienced sitting next to you," Hua said.

The process of adapting a course to the realities of ChatGPT, however, requires work from educators.

"It's an opportunity that I think feels very overwhelming," Collier said. "Because it's work, it's stuff that we have to make time for."

Associate Professor of Computer Science Ananya Das highlighted that it is a particularly challenging moment for educators, not just in higher education but also in K-12 schools. The Covid-19 pandemic pushed teachers to adapt their curricula to remote learning, and as schools have returned to in-person instruction, ChatGPT adds another jolt to the system that educators need to work into semester plans.

"I think it's going to be up to educators to make the best out of this, and that's a hard thing to ask educators to do right now," Das said. "We've been dealing with a lot of changes, and this is another set of challenges for us to work through."

But Das also said she was considering how ChatGPT can be incorporated into her courses, especially when she teaches Artificial Intelligence (CSCI 0311) in the fall.

"I'm excited to see what I can do with it, and how I make my courses better," she said.

Academic integrity

While professors expressed concerns about how ChatGPT would impact cheating at Middlebury, most also believed it ultimately falls on students to take responsibility for their learning.

"I think my general attitude is to encourage self-restraint and self-governance," Howarth said. "At the end of the day, it's the same thing I do with my kids — try to get people to make good decisions. I don't want to make the decision for them."

Moody and Howarth said that, as with other resources used while writing or coding, ChatGPT has to be cited. As long as students are honest and do not misrepresent it as their own work, it could be treated like other sources of evidence.

"In that way, I don't find it any more threatening than a book in the library," Howarth said.

Students have also found uses for ChatGPT in their lives outside academics, such as in writing networking emails and drafting cover letters. Tracy Himmel Isham, associate director of professional and career development for the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI), noted that these uses are not much different from older forms of writing based off of templates, but have notable weaknesses in a job search.

"We used to have a cover letter template, but what we found was that when they all got bundled in Handshake and went to the employer, you had kids who had written the same cover letter," Himmel Isham said.

She noted that previous changes in technology have also changed the nature of the job search. Whereas students could once write a single resume and cover letter to send to several employers, that type of untailored approach no longer works.

"Over the last decade, we've talked a lot with students about developing your story. And so that's going to be where, you know, ChatGPT doesn't know you uniquely," Himmel Isham said. "You are unique, and people see through [you] if you're not telling specifically why or how you're qualified with your own context to stories."

The CCI's code of conduct, which all students have to sign to access the Center's resources, requires students to represent themselves accurately in all job searches. While the CCI does not currently ban students from using tools like ChatGPT, Himmel Isham noted that students should remain mindful of how they rely on tools like this.

"When we think about what our code of conduct is, it's about representing yourself properly," Himmel Isham said. "And that includes how you demonstrate that through your applications, your resume, your cover letter."

AI and ethics

Professors compared it to other tools that — when first introduced — raised similar questions about the role of technology in academia. When Wikipedia launched in the early 2000s, scholars highlighted similar concerns about plagiarism and erroneous material on the website. Tools like Grammarly, which checks for a range of grammar, style and punctuation errors, provide writing aid that most faculty permit.

But faculty saw similar problems with ChatGPT as with the introduction of other tools that toe the line between original and aided work. In past Zeitgeist surveys, students consistently reported using websites like SparkNotes to summarize reading assignments as one of the most common ways they break the Middlebury Honor Code. ChatGPT, which can perform basic research, edit grammar and synthesize key takeaways from readings, brings all of these tools together — in addition to generating essay-length responses to prompts from scratch.

Moreover, the introduction of AI into classrooms has raised issues of equity. In February, OpenAI introduced a subscription service for ChatGPT that offered priority access during peak times and faster responses.

"I've seen Grammarly divide a student body between those that can pay for the top model versus the free model," Vila said. "ChatGPT has now rolled out the paid model, so it's $20 a month if you can pay — but who's going to pay $20 a month?"

As with earlier and other applications of AI, the biases of the human world leak into the tools trained on real-world data. Large language models like ChatGPT train on a massive input of language data, which includes the violent, racist and sexist messages that people share on the internet. Meta shut down its large language model, Galactica, after three days because it produced biased and incorrect information. Earlier versions of OpenAI's large language models — which have also been publicly available but cost money — ran into similar problems.

OpenAI made pioneering steps towards reducing these types of biased outputs before releasing ChatGPT, but subtle and overt forms of bias are still generated by the chatbot. The company has also come under criticism for its use of Kenyan laborers earning less than $2 per hour to comb through the most graphic material on the internet as part of the training that reduced ChatGPT's harmful responses.

Collier spoke about these issues in a faculty workshop on ChatGPT and noted that these are concerns that repeatedly arise with AI.

"A real question that you'd be asked about any AI application across our cultural and social contexts is, who is benefiting and who was harmed?" Collier said. "Are we perpetuating the harms that, you know, that we don't want to see?"

To Collier, educating students about how to responsibly use artificial intelligence — in the classroom and beyond — is central to this moment.

"It's going to be part of our lives, whether it's part of their courses here at Middlebury or not, and if it's going to be part of their lives, I want to help them make good decisions," she said. "I want them to understand not only when it's appropriate to use such tools or not, I also want them to understand what's behind those tools."

Looking ahead

While ChatGPT is only the latest in a long series of developments in large language models, its success has attracted immense attention and investment. Microsoft has integrated OpenAI's models into its new Bing Chat — which further illustrated the shortcomings of AI chatbots — and Google has plans to roll out a similar AI search feature in the near future. OpenAI released ChatGPT to improve the technology through feedback, and the massive input it has received in recent weeks is likely to improve new generations of large language models.

Das said that the introduction of ChatGPT created challenges but was an inevitable step in the field.

"Even if it didn't happen now, it would happen in a few years — software like this was bound to be introduced," Das said. "There's going to be so much more technology that we're going to have to kind of adapt to as educators. I think we're just going to kind of learn how to use these tools to enhance our overall learning."

Questions about plagiarism and intellectual property linger, as ChatGPT inevitably mimics the work that it was trained on.

"For academia, what we're really focused on is you have to give attribution, you have to do your research. You want to have a clear thought that's your own, you want to develop something through hard work and persistence," Vila said. "ChatGPT is challenging all that."

Some professors see preparing students for the future of AI as a key learning goal of the moment.

"My reaction has always been, if the students especially are going to be running up against this, then it's our job — our responsibility — to know what this thing is," Vila said.

Part of that responsibility is teaching students how to critically evaluate the role of AI as it develops in the coming years.

"We want them to have frameworks for decision making going forward, where they're not just driven by whether or not it's prohibited," Collier said.

Yet many faculty members do not expect ChatGPT — or anything that will be introduced in the near future — to supplant or surpass the types of work students do. They emphasized that it is a privilege to attend Middlebury, and that it is ultimately up to students to learn and take ownership of the process of their education.

It remains an imperfect tool — the one-sentence summary at the beginning needed a few iterations to produce something that wasn't just a copied-and-pasted paragraph from further down. It doesn't follow The Campus' style guide, and didn't understand the initial requests written with journalistic jargon to "write a lede" or "write a nutgraf." However, if it were given quotes pulled from interviews and intentionally crafted requests, it could have written reasonable paragraphs for this article or for any academic essay.

"I don't want to underestimate those continuities with all the challenges that come with technological changes, investments in learning and teaching," Gumuscu said. "But I also want students to understand we have come this far because we trusted in human intelligence."

New cafe to open in Bicentennial Hall

By JONATHAN EATON
Contributing Writer

Middlebury Dining Services and college administrators are planning to construct a new cafe in McCardell Bicentennial Hall (BiHall), with a tentative completion date in fall 2023. The cafe will be located on the second floor behind the stairs and will serve grab-and-go coffee, croissants, pastries and sandwiches.

Head of Dining and Food Services Dan Detora explained that the cafe's location is near an existing kitchenette. In years past, there was a coffee cart in BiHall that staff members could get food and beverages from. The cart eventually became too expensive, and the logistics of brewing coffee at a separate location and then distributing it on the cart became difficult.

Recently President Laurie Patton was looking for new ways to create community around campus, according to Detora.

"The president thought that from a community standpoint we needed something in [BiHall] to build community," Detora said.

After having extensive conversations with the faculty and students who frequent BiHall, the college discovered a common theme: many spoke about the way the old coffee cart brought the community together. So, the idea for a cafe located in the building emerged as a solution.

Construction on the cafe will start later this year. The project timeline depends on when the new coffee machines arrive — they typically take eight weeks to ship. The new cafe will have many self-serve options to deal with staff shortages.

Students told The Campus they are excited about the prospects of a new cafe in Bicentennial Hall.

"It would be cool for people who study late and need coffee,"Ashley Aparicio '26 said.

Other students noted how the cafe could be useful for students who don't have time to grab breakfast before an early morning class.

Along with the new cafe being built in BiHall, Detora is excited to continue to work with students on the opening of the campus food truck this spring. He hopes to incorporate Dolci, Middlebury's student-run restaurant, as well as the student groups that sell tacos and crepes in the Gamut Room.

Abigail Chang/The Middlebury Campus

Area by the vending machines where the new cafe will be located.

Middlebury phases in new LED lighting across campus as part of Energy2028 commitments

By GAVIN RANDOLPH
Contributing Writer

Four years ago Middlebury launched the Energy2028 initiative to address the growing threat of climate change. One of the major goals presented in the project was to reduce energy consumption by 25%, and, as of last year, the college had decreased usage by 10%.

Now, the college seeks to further reduce consumption by continuing to refit new LED lights around campus, starting with Bicentennial Hall (BiHall). This new project is expected to begin on May 24 with a planned completion date of Aug. 18.

Though the refit required an initial investment, the new LED lights will soon begin to help the college save money. According to Dean of Environmental Affairs and Sustainability Jack Byrne, the project "reduces the impact on our energy budget, and it will pay for itself in a relatively short period of time as well."

Energy and Technology Manager Dean Oullette is overseeing this large-scale refitting alongside outside vendors such as lighting designer Net-Zero Design and implementation manager Naylor & Breen. In addition to the building managers of BiHall and facility electricians, the group will work together to fine-tune the technical aspects of the project and come up with the best implementation strategies for the LEDs.

Last summer, a pilot project commenced on the fourth floor of BiHall to better predict the logistics and the difficulties that may arise during the complete retrofit of the 220,000 sq. ft. building. According to Oullette, the initial testing has informed what they plan to implement for the rest of the space, such as greater use of occupancy and dimming controls that could automatically turn off lights when no one is using a room.

If all goes well, this retrofit will provide a significant cut-back in energy use across campus.

"We are hoping for a 15% reduction in KWHs [kilowatt-hours] for the building in a year's time. This is a most helpful reduction for our Energy2028 goal as [BiHall] is our largest single energy consumer on campus," Oullette wrote in an email to The Campus.

Byrne spoke highly of the work of the LED refit project team.

"The thoughtful and collaborative work that Dean [Oullette] and his team in Facilities are doing has many benefits beyond energy conservation. It engages and educates our community in how to implement new ideas and approaches for the energy we use in our daily activities," Byrne wrote in an email to The Campus.

Byrne also elaborated on other benefits to using LEDs in campus buildings.

"LED lighting is more environmentally friendly from a life-cycle point of view and has fewer impacts from resource extraction, manufacture, packaging and transport and disposal/recycling," Byrne wrote. "This is a great example of how our Energy2028 efforts to address the climate crisis can use a newer technology with a human touch."

A complete refitting of Painter and Starr Halls is expected to be completed during this upcoming spring break. Preparations are currently being made to begin refitting more buildings on campus.

Regarding the Energy2028 goal that Middlebury set four years ago, many believe this project is a solid step in the right direction.

When asked about his thoughts on the project, Ben Taylor '24 expressed appreciation for Middlebury's work on sustainability.

"I think that colleges that have good reputations, such as Middlebury, should be setting the standard for things like this," Taylor said. "It's easy to teach classes about it, it's easy to talk about it a lot, but it's a lot harder to set an example."

COULD A STUDENT-RUN BAR BE COMING TO CAMPUS?

By HANNAH SAYRE
Opinions Editor

Students Shane Silverman '24.5, Student Government Association Feb senator, and Marc Chu '24 hope to bring a student-run bar to the Middlebury campus this spring. With the guidance of Executive Director of Food Service Operations Dan Detora, Silverman and Chu are outlining logistics and anticipating administrators' concerns for the project. As Chu is abroad this spring, Silverman plans to present their preliminary proposal to Vice President for Student Affairs Smita Ruzicka this week. If Middlebury approves the initiative, Silverman hopes to begin providing limited or full service soon after spring break.

Silverman and Chu are motivated by a sense that the Middlebury nightlife scene is lacking and that students desire more outlets for their weekend energy. Silverman outlined how dorm parties, social house events and Two Brothers Tavern's Thursday bar nights do not generate a sustainable nightlife scene — Two Brothers Tavern experiences long lines and many social houses feel a responsibility to host open parties every weekend.

Chu commented on their motivations for creating the bar.

"With more and more social houses' parties being exclusive to their members and suite parties being limited to close friend groups, we feel that there is no place on campus to meet new people," Chu said. "We feel that a student bar can contribute to a better, safer and more inclusive socializing atmosphere."

The student bar initiative is still in its preliminary phase, and Silverman and Chu have yet to formally present their proposal to administrators. According to Silverman, the preliminary phase includes, among other things, securing a location for the bar and coordinating with campus and state partners, including the Vermont Department of Liquor and Lottery. Silverman, Chu and a few of their 21-and-over friends are in the process of becoming certified with the state to sell and serve alcohol.

"We have yet to meet with the administration," Silverman said. "We're likely going to present a fully fleshed-out plan, including dates, locations, staffing and menu. So from them, it's just going to be a yes or no, or they're going to add some input, and it's going to be a quick change."

While Silverman and Chu initially considered Crossroads Cafe as the location for the bar, a Vermont law prohibits alcohol from being advertised in places commonly frequented by underage students. Silverman then thought of the Mahaney Arts Center basement cafe space, which is currently used for occasional catering events. Detora commented on this idea.

"[The cafe space] does have a built-in bar and refrigeration," Detora said. "So from an operational standpoint, it makes pretty good sense there. Now, Shane [Silverman] and Marc [Chu] still have to go through events management to see if it's available and talk to the folks in the building and make sure they're comfortable with it."

Silverman and Chu's proposal is not without anticipated challenges. They will have to work with the fact that a large percentage of the Middlebury student body is underage. Additionally, they hope to curate an atmosphere that encourages safe drinking. It is against Vermont state law to provide a service that promotes the rapid consumption of alcohol. Chu and Silverman noted that they are "not going to be putting up beer pong tables trying to get people to drink as much as possible because that is not the service [they're] trying to provide."

"It's going to be a challenge for us to figure out how to provide a safe, fun, affordable nightlife experience to all students, while also adhering to state, college and our guidelines," Silverman said.

According to Detora, there have been student bars in years past. Soon after Detora began working at Middlebury ten years ago, students occasionally served drinks in the game room behind Crossroads Cafe.

"I think what the lack of immediate pushback from staff and administrators shows is how much institutional social knowledge has been lost to Covid-19," Silverman said. "[A student bar] isn't a new idea like Marc and I thought it was."

In spring 2017, students opened a restaurant bar at 51 Main Street, bartending and serving food most Thursday nights under the supervision of Dining Services. However, the waning of enthusiasm for the 51 Main Street bar and the Crossroads Cafe bar, for reasons unknown, eventually led to their closure. Detora expects that Dining Services would play a similar role this time around, supervising but rarely interfering.

"Vermont is very strict on laws around alcohol, so to make sure that we're following all those rules, dining would have to provide overall supervision," Detora said. "Now, that being said, it's more or less just training. If we see something that's wrong, then it would be up to the students to correct it. Unless it is a very big violation, we wouldn't really be directly involved."

To obtain student input, Silverman and Chu created the Middlebury Student Bar Interest Poll. When asked to select the three most significant barriers to enjoying campus nightlife from a list of six, 49 students collectively ranked "distance," "social house atmosphere" and "weather" as the top three. The poll also includes a list of various ciders, beers, wines and cocktails, as well as non-alcoholic beverages like soda, juice, coffee and tea, alongside their proposed prices, and allows students to select preferred options. Silverman and Chu hope to continue taking student interests into account, and they encourage any and all students to take their online survey, which is still available.

If approved, Silverman and Chu plan to call the bar "The Catamount." Catamount, or cougars, are now extinct in the Northeast, but they once habited remote environments like Middlebury.

"There's a metaphorical value to it, with an elusive cat in the mountains," Silverman said. "Going out and trying to find a catamount is just as hard as going out and trying to find a good time in Middlebury."

Abigail Chang/The Middlebury Campus

One of the proposed locations for the new bar is in the former Rehearsals Cafe space in the Mahaney Arts Center.

MIDDLEBURY SWEETS: THE LARGEST CANDY STORE IN VERMONT

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Local Editor

When Blanca Jenne first opened a stationary store behind her home in Cornwall, Vt., she never anticipated the business would turn into Middlebury Sweets, Vermont's largest candy store and a motel combined. Located at 1395 Route 7, Jenne now proudly sells more than 15,000 different types of candy and accommodates guests in several single queen and double queen bed candy-themed motel rooms.

As the scrapbooking industry faltered throughout the 2009 recession, Jenne knew she could not keep her stationary store in Cornwall open. When she placed four candy cases — the same four that are in the shop today — at the front of the shop, she noticed they drew in more customers than the scrapbooking materials for which the store was known.

Middlebury was losing its only candy store at the time, so with the experience of running a gift basket business several years prior and a history of gathering M&M collectibles under her belt, Jenne decided to make the switch to a full-on candy store in 2007 and open Middlebury Sweets.

Since candy is often purchased in small quantities, Jenne knew she would need a backup business to support her store. Her husband, Brad Jenne, already owned a self-storage business, so the couple began searching for another property to use as more rentable storage space. When they discovered a motel for sale in 2017, Brad suggested they buy it, maintain it as is and move the candy store there — Jenne agreed.

Though running a motel alongside the candy store has definitely added to her workload, Jenne said the two businesses complement each other surprisingly well and the purchase has been worth it. According to her, customers who don't do their research before booking their rooms at the motel often wonder why the name is "Sweets" rather than "Suites" until they arrive, notice the candy-themed pillows, and enter the sweet-filled shop.

"Nobody is disappointed," Jenne told The Campus. "It's kind of funny that I ended up opening a candy store, but then again it fits my personality very well because I like to make people happy."

Middlebury students may often miss the long orange building with a bright green sign out front on their way to the Snow Bowl — but it is a popular stop for tourists hoping to experience Vermont's largest candy store.

"I'm in the middle of nowhere, so I have to have a niche," Jenne said. "We wanted to be somewhat of an attraction or destination."

The shop is stocked with Harry Potter-themed chocolate gold coins, Vermont-sourced maple lollipops and syrup, along with popular brands such as Jelly Belly, Sour Patch Kids and Nestle chocolate. To live up to the title of Vermont's largest candy store, Jenne said she tries to pack as much variety as possible into the store.

In addition to selling candy from her 10–12 vendors, Jenne also makes her own chocolates. Jenne is self-taught, and, with the exception of a tempering machine and cooker, she does everything by hand in a small kitchen.

Jenne said her peanut butter cups are by far her most popular handmade treat.

She also offers a buffet service for weddings — customers can come in and choose 8–10 different candies, and the shop will set up a buffet with glass jars, scoops and tongs for guests to help themselves.

"It's retro, I think, and for a lot of people it's going back to their childhood," said Jenne, in reference to the shop's motto: "We cater to the kid in you."

In recent years, TikTok trends have been a major driver of what's most popular in the store at any given moment, according to Jenne. She tries to keep up with the online trends to find out what will soon be in demand. For example, Slime Licker's Toxic Waste Sour Candy was out of stock for months because of its popularity on the app, Jenne added. Unusual candy-flavored sodas have also gained traction, and customers are now requesting freeze dried candy. Jenne has even started selling toys, including Legos.

"We're trying to branch out a bit, which is always important as a small business. It's easy to get comfortable and I try not to do that, I try to keep changing it up," Jenne said.

Middlebury Sweets Shop is open every day of the week, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tom Nevins/The Middlebury Campus
Middlebury Sweets candy store and motel, located at 1395 US-7 in Middlebury

Gather on the Green: Middlebury's new community living room

By BRIAN MEJIA
Journalism Fellow

Community living room space Gather opened in downtown Middlebury on Feb. 14. Located at 48 Merchants Row, the space is a Bread Loaf Mountain Zen Community project that aims to bring the people of Middlebury together by offering a place to connect and build relationships.

The primary goal of Gather is to foster a more tight-knit community in the town, said Joshin Byrnes, the leader of the Zen Community.

"We're separated by class, by education, by race, by religion, by age, by ability, by the status of our mental health, the status of our substance use... the goal here is to create a place where people can walk through the door without a label, without being categorized, without being diagnosed, and can just be formally received as whole and complete human beings," Byrnes said. "The place will be open to anyone who needs a break and wants to relax or use the restroom or laundry facilities, or grab a drink or a snack."

Gather offers amenities and activities for the town residents and Middlebury students alike, such as food, conversation, and therapeutic programming. The programming — which includes craft days, game nights, recovery and wellness meetings and community acupuncture — is designed to be both entertaining and healing, according to Byrnes.

In addition, the space has areas for relaxation, laundry machines and showers. Since the Zen Community hopes Gather can be a space that is welcoming to everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs, there is a dedicated area within the building where individuals can quietly reflect and meditate, irrespective of their faith or mindset.

The Gather space is free to anyone who enters. This was made possible by donations from a variety of sources, including contributions from individuals in the Zen Community — a group of approximately 1,300 people around the world — along with other private donations from donors the community has been in contact with.

The idea behind the space being free is that it will encourage people to enter and explore what it has to offer without any financial constraints, Byrnes said. Byrnes added that he hopes this will encourage a sense of curiosity in people and allow them to experience what it is like to see themselves as others and others as themselves.

This past Sunday, Feb. 5, the Middlebury Muslim Students Association and some community members held a bake sale event at the community space. The event aimed to raise money for relief efforts in Turkey and Syria, where recent earthquakes have caused significant damage and loss of life.

The bake sale featured a wide variety of homemade baked goods and pastries, as well as hot beverages such as tea and coffee. All proceeds from the event were donated to Bridge to Türkiye and Doctors Without Borders.

Byrnes, who is also an affiliate chaplain at the college, said that he welcomes Middlebury students to use the space.

Additionally, there are opportunities for students to volunteer their time or become "Gather Friends," which would mean that they could become involved in the mission of the space by contributing to the events and activities hosted there. By opening up the space to students and encouraging their involvement, the community space can serve as a bridge between the college and the broader community, fostering greater engagement and collaboration.

"I imagine that this may be a place for students who are curious about who lives here in Middlebury and want to develop relationships with people who live here across the usual barriers like socioeconomics, educational differences, cultural backgrounds, world views," Byrnes said.

Byrnes also expressed interest in creating Zen Peacemaker or a Gather Internship for a few college students.

"Interns would actively participate in holding safe, welcoming, and warm grassroots community spaces for a wide variety of individuals. We would train interns in trauma-informed hospitality, peer listening, and nonviolent communication," Byrnes said. He added that while Gather is a secular space focused on inclusivity, those interested in learning about the principles of Zen Peacemaker practice would have the opportunity to study with experienced Zen Peacemaker practitioners and teachers.

Updated every Tuesday, the website GatherOnTheGreen.org serves as a hub for information on the various events and activities hosted at Gather.

Brian Mejia/The Middlebury Campus
Gather, located at 48 Merchants Row, opened in mid-February in downtown Middlebury

In pictures and in words, Meg Madden brings mycology to Middlebury

BY RUBY NEUSTADT
Contributing Writer

Courtesy of Meg Madden
Photograph Madden captured of green elf cups, Chlorociboria aeruginascens.

Courtesy of Meg Madden
Madden holding a specimen of Reishi Mushroom, Ganoderma Tsugae.

Floristry, cabinetry, jewelry making, photography and everything in between, Meg Madden has done it. Most recently however, Madden's work has turned to something unexpected: mushrooms.

A Middlebury local, Madden has extensive experience in the world of art and has continued to try out different mediums. This time, she is adding is "author" to her resume. I met with Madden last week at her mycology photography exhibit held at Middlebury's Town Hall Theatre to learn more about her work.

Raised in Middlebury, Madden spent her childhood in the woods, where she grew to find comfort. Briefly straying from Middlebury to attend art school, Madden explored various careers such as jewelry, landscape designing and carpentry.

Upon returning to Addison County, Madden purchased a house overlooking the Battell Woods and continued her artistic endeavors. When the pandemic struck, Madden, like countless others, found herself with an abundance of free time.

On one pandemic day, a walk in the woods turned into a life changing moment. Trying to kill some time, Madden and her daughter wandered aimlessly in the forest — until her daughter unexpectedly called her over to examine something on the forest floor: a patch of bright red mushrooms. Madden was shocked — she had never seen mushrooms so vibrant.

The sight inspired the pair to give the fungi mystical names, like "scarlet fairy cups" or "scarlet elf thimbles." Continuing their walk, Madden noticed more unique, intriguing fungi popping up in her own backyard. Once she returned home, Madden searched online for the vibrant little mushrooms, which she discovered were called Scarlet Elf Cups, shockingly like the name she and her daughter had invented for them. Madden's interest was piqued.

From then onward, Madden began bringing her camera into the woods every day to capture the beauty of her own backyard, and then posting those pictures to her Instagram.

@MegMaddenDesign started off small, with around 1,000 followers. When she began posting the images, Madden expected nothing more than a few likes and comments. As she soon discovered, there was a serious intersection between the worlds of mycology and extreme close-up photography — Madden had hit the sweet spot. Her account soon exploded to over 40,000 followers, and Madden received endless support for the photography she had started on a whim.

An artist by trade, Madden described her photos as cereal box packaging. When you enter the grocery store, you may not know what cereal you want, but if the packaging stands out, that's the one you will pick. Her mushroom images draw people in visually and make the forest more accessible to all followers.

Madden shared how one of her followers, an 80-year-old woman, sent her a message saying that she likes how the page makes her feel like she is in the woods too, even though she can no longer physically explore.

Motivated to share her newfound experience of the forest with others, Madden also began leading mushroom walks around Middlebury in an effort to empower locals through education and break down some of the negative associations with mushrooms. For those who do not have much familiarity with the woods, mushrooms can be scary, and recent pop-culture portrayals have not helped with that.

Madden cited "The Last of Us," a new video game and show featuring Cordyceps — a fictionalized version of a real-life fungus that zombifies insects in real life — as an example of this negative portrayal. In the game and show, Cordyceps is capable of turning humans into zombies. Madden hopes to break down some of the barriers between humans and nature.

One day upon opening her Instagram direct messages, Madden found a note from the publisher Running Press expressing interest in turning her work into a book. For Madden, this presented an opportunity to not only entertain nature-lovers but also teach those who know nothing about the world of fungi. Her reaction to this message was pure shock at being granted free rein to turn her passion for mycology into a guide for readers — from budding mycologists to seasoned veterans.

When asked how she felt about jumping into the deep end, making another change to her career path, Madden said she did not have a choice. She said she has found her calling, finally discovering the perfect combination of art, teaching and science. Madden had a few words of wisdom for people confronted with substantial change. "Embrace being uncomfortable," she said.

For her, the feeling of discomfort means she is doing something right.

Describing her book as "accurately whimsical," Madden said she hopes for it to be something between a field guide and a work of art. The connection between art and environmentalism is essential, Madden said. Breaking down preconceived notions and hoping to connect humans to their environment changes the way people see the world around them and hopefully inspires them to take better care of it, she added.

Madden shared that if she could be any of the mushrooms she has photographed, it would have to be Green Elf Cups or Green Stain Fungus. These vivacious turquoise (her favorite color) mushrooms appear all throughout the woods of Vermont, leaving a blue stain on the wood they grow upon. Madden said she feels they are speaking to her, providing her encouragement to leave her mark on the world everywhere she goes.

Madden will present her new book, "This is a Book for People Who Love Mushrooms," at the Ilsley Public Library on March 7 at 7 p.m. for those interested in learning more about her mycology journey and the fungi surrounding Middlebury.

Take a bite: A love letter to my body

Op-Ed

***Rach Peck** is a member of the class of 2025.*

Content warning: This article contains references to eating disorders.

It's 8:30 on a Monday morning, and I'm having a staring contest with my breakfast.

When did toast get so scary? It makes sense if you look at it hard enough. That square, sharpened shape. The top half is dark, an almost burnt brown. The bottom half is barely toasted and resembles a storm cloud. And the shape — it's like it's demanding to know how you're going to eat it. Will you attack from the sides – working your way to the middle, which is now weakened without a crusty armor to protect it from your incisors? Or will you instead attack from an angle, gradually extending its front line before devouring it into nothing but buttery crumbs on your finger tips?

Still staring at the toast, I realize that I haven't breathed in a minute — I should probably do that.

There's a common misconception that people with disordered eating appear physically exactly as the media portrays them to be. Similar to most things portrayed by the media, this is total horses**t. It only makes sense that constantly dwelling on the perceived correlation between the size of my body and how much I must eat would make eating a stressful task.

But I get away with it. Every day I get a normal plate of food, but usually I'll eat less than a quarter of it. It will normally go unnoticed, except for the occasional awkwardness this creates for my companions as they sit behind cleared plates and wonder when I'll be done eating so we can go home.

I do eat enough, thankfully. I have learned to graze, eating cucumber slices by the bowlful and random bowls of cereal here and there. But there's something about meals that is much harder.

This new tension between myself and my toast stems from an offhand, intoxicated comment someone made in my direction over the weekend. Though the chicken tender she was being offered would likely have been a cure for her inebriated ails, she instead brushed it aside, proclaiming that it was for "fat people." I paused to look at the sandwich in my hands, the only real thing of substance I'd been able to eat all day. Suddenly, I wasn't hungry anymore.

It's weird to be at a crossroads of both knowing that this fear of food is irrational yet still feeling continually susceptible to it. I know that I eat what my body needs. I know that I walk an arbitrary 15,000 steps a day. I know I do what I can to be healthy, and I'm satisfied with that. Yet those offhanded comments still have a profound effect on me — there is nothing that I can do to stop them from getting to me.

So I feel bad for myself. But also, I feel bad for her. I think of how delicious that chicken tender would have been. How cruel it is to live your life with a gnawing feeling that food will make your body something you don't want it to be — something you think will make you unlovable. It won't. I have been fat my whole life, but I have also been loved my whole life.

For many years, I correlated my self-worth with my size. I would regularly decide to proactively try to lose weight. This effort was motivated not by a desire to be healthier but instead a desire to look healthier; it almost always would put me in a headspace of disordered eating thoughts and sometimes even nearly push me into clinical eating disorder territory. At some point, I realized that learning to accept and love myself unconditionally was never going to stem from how conventionally attractive I was. I realized that truly accepting myself meant that as long as I know I'm making the choices that honor my mind and body, that is enough. Growing up in a body that is constantly rejected from romanticization only means I've truly had to learn to love myself, for all my parts, before I can love anyone else.

I take another deep breath. I stare at the toast. It stares at me.

I think this time I'll eat it diagonally.

Why I'm teaching yoga as a white person

Op-Ed

***Emily Thompson** is a member of the class of 2023.*

When I found myself army-crawling my way through a tumultuous senior year of high school, I turned to yoga with the hope that it might offer me respite. In the sanctuary of those evenings I spent with YouTube videos and my mom's hand-me-down mat, I could breathe and still my mind, leaving behind my daytime anxiety that often brought me to the brink of tears. What's more, I was often invited to show myself love through those practices in a way I'd never been taught before. I learned how nourishing hugging my own legs to my chest feels and how glorious surrender in bālāsana (child's pose) can be. Yoga got me through.

However, when the #BlackLivesMatter uprising of the summer of 2020 ignited conversations about racial justice and whiteness, I found South Asian folks talking about cultural appropriation on social media. For the first time, I realized that because white supremacy culture had normalized the world of white-washed yoga, I likely had been contributing to the cultural theft of a rich tradition I hadn't taken the time to understand. It was time to do my homework.

Yoga at its core is an ancient spiritual tradition — organized, practiced and established in India. I want to pay tribute to my teachers from the Indian diaspora and all of the practitioners of yoga who held and passed on their somatic and spiritual knowledge. I want to honor Susanna Barkataki and Anjali Rao, the teachers of my 200-hour Yoga Teacher Training (YTT) and the facilitators of my spiritual journey through the ancient practice of yoga. I would also like to honor their teachers and their teachers' teachers, without whom so many could not have even grazed the depths of this practice.

When I started practicing yoga regularly, I didn't know what a spiritual lineage acknowledgment was. I didn't even have a clear enough perception of my own whiteness to ask a question about the cultural lineage of yoga. For my younger self, like for so many others here in the West, yoga was a physical and mental practice used to tone the body and focus the mind, perhaps for therapeutic purposes. There was no discussion of its Indian and spiritual roots.

I won't belabor the problems with cultural appropriation in yoga, since so many South Asian practitioners and teachers have educational resources that are readily available online. Everything I know is from them, so I'd encourage you to start with Susanna's Instagram page @SusannaBarkataki and go from there. It was through her work that I knew I needed to learn more, regardless of whether or not I ever wanted to teach, and I knew her YTT would be exactly what I needed to hold myself accountable throughout my educational and spiritual journey.

Through this virtual YTT, I met dozens of brilliant students from around the world and learned from our weekly cohort leaders Anjali Rao and M Camellia and guest speakers like Melissa Shah, Tejal Petal and Jacoby Ballard whose groundbreaking work is changing what we think of as "yoga" or a "yoga practice," a bit more every day. Melissa taught me how to use the principles of yoga to fight for social justice in and beyond the studio. Tejal unveiled the insidiousness of perfectionism and how it intersects with yogic philosophy and practice. I learned from Jacoby about making yoga accessible to people of all genders and how he sees yoga intersecting with queerness. M helped broaden my understanding of yoga āsana (the postures of yoga that Westerners often conflate to be the entirety of the practice of yoga), grounding me in the truth that the "fullest extension of the posture" is never how far you can reach but rather how much you let the posture move the life force within you. And, of course, there were Susanna and Anjali who opened my eyes from the beginning and continued to steep me in the tradition a bit more every session.

As I mentioned before, yoga is not simply āsana or a sequence of postures like downward dog and child's pose. Susanna and Anjali taught me Aṣṭāṅga yoga, which means "eight-limbed path." Āsana poses only represent a fraction of yoga as a whole; there are also the yamas (outer, ethical codes), niyamas (inner codes for personal transformation), prānāyāma (breathwork), pratyāhāra (focus), dhāraṇā (mindfulness), dhyāna (meditation) and samādhi (bliss). Through my education at the YTT, I fell in love with a whole world of wisdom that could move me beyond the brink of tears — to the safety of acceptance, nonviolence and peace. Though I hardly feel enlightened, when I look back at the girl staving off tears at the foot of her mat all those years ago, I look back with compassion and pity. If only she had had access to all of the tools and wisdom that I do today.

I suppose the most important thing I learned was the meaning of the word "yoga." It comes from the Sanskrit word root yuj, meaning "to yoke, to unite." While my instructors taught me about the yogic philosophy behind oneness and unity, it was my peers who showed me what yoga was. Yoga was my peer holding us accountable when white supremacy culture infiltrated the space. Yoga was another peer fighting for Iranian women and the LGBTQ+ community under attack from a violent regime. Yoga was another peer offering space and gentle silence for our collective pain. They lived by the yamas and niyamas and changed our lives in ways that transcended individualized yogic practices.

I signed up to teach yoga here at Middlebury because although I've only just begun the learning process, I believe the Middlebury community deserves to know the truth about yoga, one that is so often hidden behind Lululemon leggings and pilates-toned bodies. Yoga is not designed for the solitude of one's bedroom, though it can be the safe space we often need to get started, as it was for me. I believe the true richness of the practice begins in community, and in unity. Therefore, despite the mistakes I'll make and the things I have yet to learn, I believe I owe it to Susanna, Anjali and my YTT peers to share my practice with Middlebury, where collectively, we can hold each other in oneness and move beyond appropriation together.

COURTESY OF EMILY THOMPSON

Thompson and her cousin in tree pose in California.

AI chatbots are changing Middlebury's academic landscape. How should we respond?

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Susanna Schatz

"I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment."

Every Middlebury student knows this phrase by heart, as our honor code is a staple of the Middlebury community. When students take accountability for the integrity of their work, professors are able to trust their students. When professors trust their students, students get to learn without feeling policed. This sense of trust is a core tenet of Middlebury's academic culture, and one that Middlebury loves to tout on its website and tours.

However, the landscape of information and tools that are available to students is rapidly changing. This has led many to ask the question: how will ChatGPT impact the honor code?

If you don't know, ChatGPT is a free AI chatbot, and it's quickly become the fastest-growing internet app. It can respond to complex prompts in a matter of seconds, mimicking a variety of stylistic tones. It can quickly write copy, edit text or summarize dense information. While the technology has its limits and drawbacks, it's also incredibly powerful, which is evident in the fact that it can generate text that sounds remarkably human.

For the pessimistic, AI chatbots like ChatGPT may seem like the end of academic honesty. Why would anyone spend weeks writing a research paper when they could just plug the prompt into ChatGPT and have it ready to go in under a minute?

Especially for those in academia, it's easy to view ChatGPT as a threat, but the reality is a little more complicated. In fact, we can't quite be sure what role AI chatbots are going to play in the future, or what exactly they're capable of. As such, it's important for everyone to exercise caution in how we engage with them.

What's going on?

As ChatGPT has begun to permeate Middlebury's academic world, professors have had varying reactions. Some have banned all use of ChatGPT, and some have even gone as far as to employ software to detect text that may have been generated by AI. Others have actively encouraged the use of AI chatbots in research, as long as that use is fully disclosed. Others have not acknowledged the technology at all. Policies tend to vary widely between departments as well.

While everyone seems to be in agreement that having a chatbot write your entire paper for you violates the spirit of the honor code, there's no unified stance beyond that.

That inconsistency leaves students unsure of how to use the chatbot, if at all. While the honor code has always, by design, been somewhat open to interpretation, this inconsistency seems particularly difficult to navigate. What if a professor hasn't mentioned ChatGPT at all? Should students assume that its use is prohibited? Should they be punished if they guess incorrectly?

In some ways, it's a question of equity. Not all students come to Middlebury with the same level of experience in writing or research. An AI chatbot could be an equalizer in that sense: students could use it to help them hone in on the perfect "academic tone" or to make research less intimidating.

However, AI can also be quite inequitable. One key concern is that the bots themselves may be biased. Because they're trained on existing human information, they can inadvertently adopt biases from their source material. There's also a question of access. While ChatGPT is free right now, later generations of the tool might not be. It already has a paid subscription tier.

So here's the situation in a nutshell: nobody is sure what to do with this new technology, and students and professors alike are floundering as they try to feel their way through uncharted territory.

What should we do?

First and foremost, we should preserve Middlebury's culture of academic trust. That goes for professors and students.

Students have a responsibility to maintain the trust they've built with their professors. Just because ChatGPT is easy to use doesn't mean we should use it at every opportunity. We're all at Middlebury to learn, and we all know how to recognize when we're meeting that goal.

ChatGPT can easily be a tool to enhance learning. It can also easily serve to avoid learning. Students are going to need to recognize when they're skimping on their education and when they're not. It's that simple. There are many ways to use ChatGPT, and it will often be up to us to judge which of those uses are academically honest.

Professors, for their part, have a responsibility to work with students and maintain the spirit of the honor code. Suddenly ramping up academic regulations or greeting papers with suspicion shows a lack of trust. If we believe in the honor code, then professors should assume that students will use ChatGPT, or not, in accordance with the guidelines they're given and their own best judgment.

It's also important to remember that AI chatbots are more than a big bad wolf. They are exciting new tools, and they will almost certainly affect the professional world that Middlebury students find upon graduating. While prioritizing academic integrity, the Middlebury community should also make sure that students graduate knowing how to use AI effectively. We're going to need to.

How should we regulate?

Currently, we do not believe that a sweeping policy against AI chatbots at Middlebury would be effective or useful. We don't know enough to make absolute statements, so for now, professors should have space to make their own policies about AI. On the flip side, students should be given the benefit of the doubt when the rules get murky.

As we're all learning the academic realities of life with ChatGPT, it's important that we meet each other with grace and patience. Professors are going to need to troubleshoot AI policies, and students are going to need to figure out appropriate boundaries for using the technology.

Everyone at Middlebury values education. That's why we're here. We just need to keep trusting each other.

How The Campus is approaching ChatGPT

Notes from the Desk

***Abigail Chang**, **Rain Ji** and **Tony Sjodin** are part of the Executive Team of The Campus and are members of the class of 2023*

This week we examined how faculty, staff and students are navigating the introduction of ChatGPT, an AI chatbot created by OpenAI and released to the public in November. The Campus also editorialized on campus policies surrounding the chatbot, but we've also been having conversations about our own internal expectations. Given the nature of our organization and ChatGPT's writing capabilities, we want to clarify our guidelines for AI chatbot use in reporting and shed some light on our decision-making process.

We'll likely encounter work submitted to The Campus that has incorporated ChatGPT in some way. We know that there is AI detection software out there and that some professors have brought that into their classrooms. We're not in the business of policing our writers, nor do we have any intention of being punitive about AI use. But we do have concerns about certain uses of ChatGPT or other AI chatbots that would make it important for us to know if a writer has used it.

Our main request is this: if you use ChatGPT or other AI for any part of the reporting process, please let us know.

> Our main request is this: If you use ChatGPT or other AI for any part of the reporting process, please let us know.

Most of our concerns, and the reason why we feel it is important that we're aware when a writer has used AI, are due to documented instances of bias and inaccuracies in the text that ChatGPT — and other AI chatbots — produce. Given that we aim to publish fair and accurate reporting, this could impact our approach to editing — particularly with regards to the rigor of the fact-checking process.

With this in mind, we ask that contributors to The Campus not use the chatbot to write their articles for them. Beyond the bias and accuracy concerns this could present, we've tested it out, and it generally does not produce stories that are stylistically or structurally in line with what we typically publish. Using AI to complete or significantly assist the writing process will not save you or your editor time.

We want to be clear that we do not see use of ChatGPT as inherently bad. We believe there are some ways that the chatbot could be useful — especially as newer writers are learning how to report their first stories. Writers could use the chatbot as a kind of virtual editor, asking it to explain the typical structure of a news article or how to interview a source. In this sense, it could be a valuable teaching tool.

We are also not necessarily opposed to writers using the chatbot for certain parts of their reporting process, such as asking it to generate a basic set of interview questions or help write emails asking sources for interviews, though this is still something we would want to be informed about. At the same time, we see The Campus as a training ground for student journalists — one of the few opportunities we get to learn about journalistic writing given that the college does not have a journalism major. If writers use ChatGPT in ways that replace, rather than enhance, that learning process, it feels like they would be robbing themselves of that opportunity.

As members of the small community we are often reporting on, it is even more important that we're thoughtful about what we include in our articles. The words we choose matter — sometimes significantly for the jobs, reputations and lives of those we write about — and letting a chatbot that does not have all the context choose them for us invites a greater risk that they're not quite the right ones.

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The Middlebury Campus

On the Record: Degrees of anonymity

Column

Abigail Chang *is the Editor in Chief of The Campus and a member of the class of 2023*

On the Record provides the inside scoop on the operations of The Campus, addressing common misconceptions, policies and our process. If you have a question about The Campus that you'd like to see answered in a future installment of the column, send it to campus@middlebury.edu.

One of the questions Campus editors often get is whether or not a source can be anonymous. But when it comes to anonymity in journalism, things can get pretty complicated.

On the one hand, clearly identifying a source with their full name and the positions or roles they hold can help establish their credibility in a story. Knowing who has provided the information included in a story can help the reader parse through what is probably not explicitly stated in an article: how a source's level of experience with the article's subject matter or relation to positions of power might impact their perspective. For an example of how The Campus typically identifies sources and why including information about their role in relation to the story is important, consider the sourcing in last week's article about changes to the course schedule, written by Journalism Fellow Daniza Tazabekova '26.

Being able to clearly identify a source can also be a powerful framing tool for reporters, especially given that reporters can't directly share their opinion about a source's credibility or potential biases. Providing as much information as possible about a source — especially to establish their ties and relationship to the story subject matter — is key because it can completely change the light in which their comments are read. Take, for example, a recent New York Times story on Elizabeth Koch that received criticism on Twitter in part because the reporter did not note that a source who spoke positively about Koch had received a multi-million dollar grant from her nonprofit. (The story has since been updated, per the Editor's Note at the bottom.)

But as much as clearly identifying sources can be useful for the reporter and the reader, there are cases when being identified might make a source less likely to share their story. We want to ensure that when we're covering a topic, especially one centered around a conflict, we're capturing a variety of perspectives. This includes, perhaps most importantly, viewpoints from sources who are not in positions of power. In some cases, the only way we can responsibly and thoroughly report those stories is by speaking with sources on the condition of anonymity.

The Campus decides whether or not to grant anonymity on a case-by-case basis, but this often boils down to risk of retribution. What does this look like in practice? If a source has concerns that criticizing their employer could result in consequences in their professional life, we will generally grant them anonymity. If you've ever seen this in an article (check out reporting on the new staff compensation matrix by Senior Local Editor Maggie Reynolds '24 for some examples), quote or information attributions generally still note how a source is connected to the story at hand and the reason why they are anonymous.

We try to grant anonymity extremely sparingly. In fact, we ask reporters to confirm with their editors before agreeing to interview a source who would like to remain anonymous. And for fact-checking and follow-up purposes, editors still need to know the identity of anonymous sources in case we need to contact them for additional comments or confirmation of information they shared with the reporter. In most cases, we do our best to find sources that will speak "on the record" — meaning they'll allow the reporter to identify them in the story — and rely on anonymous interviews if no other source can provide the same information or perspective.

But occasionally key sources don't want to be quoted or referenced in the story at all — even anonymously. In these cases, reporters will sometimes conduct interviews that are "off the record" or "on background." We try to avoid "off-the-record" interviews as much as possible since it means that the reporter cannot use any of the information the source shares. Such interviews are only really useful for giving the reporter a sense of who else they might talk to for on-the-record information and what kinds of questions they should ask. They can also be helpful for corroborating or fact-checking information the reporter gets from another source.

In many cases, a source will tell us they only want to be interviewed "off the record" when what they really mean is "on background" or even "on deep background." "On background" interviews essentially result in the kinds of anonymous attributions that you'll sometimes see in The Campus — the reporter can still quote or paraphrase the source's information, but they cannot name them. "Deep background" interviews also allow the reporter to use the source's information, but they cannot attribute it to the source in any way, including anonymously.

You can think of the types of interviews as a spectrum from "on the record" to "on background" to "deep background" to "off the record." While "background" and "deep background" interviews can be helpful to reporters, they begin to pose problems for the credibility of information about a subject if sources continually request them. (This is a big issue for reporters at major publications — the tech-focused outlet The Verge changed their policy on "background" interviews a couple years ago and said the default mode for interviews would be "on the record.")

So, part of the process of sourcing a story requires negotiation between a source and reporter about the type of interview they are going to do before that interview begins. Though there is some debate about this, many journalists will tell you that the reporter and source need to come to an agreement about the degree of anonymity or attribution before the source shares information pertaining to the story topic — otherwise all their comments might be considered fair game.

Even when a source and a journalist have decided on guidelines for their interactions, these agreements can still get messy: The status of a once off-the-record conversation between the publisher of The New York Times and then-President Donald Trump became the subject of news stories in its own right in 2018. But, in general, establishing rules and boundaries for an interview ahead of time is useful for both the reporter and the source. (It's worth noting some journalists will decline off-the-record interviews, so it's always a good idea to communicate interview expectations early on.)

Why write about all of this? I want to ensure that sources can make informed decisions about the best mode of interview for them given their particular situation or the sensitivity of the story being reported. I'm also hoping this context will help readers understand the different ways reporters at The Campus and elsewhere collect information for articles. It's important to know what's going into an article in order to evaluate the credibility of the reporting.

I'M SORRY IF I'VE SCARED YOU

Op-Ed

Gage Schrier *is a member of the class of 2024.5*

Multiple times over the past year, one of my friends has told me they felt scared of me before they got to know me. Just the other day, one of my best friends said to me that now, after two years, he was just beginning to understand my social cues, saying that for the longest time, he thought I was always angry. If it took two years to realize my furrowed brow is actually an indicator of anxiety and not anger, there is a non-zero chance that strangers think that I am angry at all times. I attribute this to my near inability and unwillingness to smile.

I don't smile at people. Perhaps it's a learned behavior; my parents seldom smile outside of times of genuine joy. Smiling at random people, even acquaintances, was a borderline faux pas in my community. Why would someone see me, or, for that matter, anyone else, and smile? Faces do not, for many people, spark intense joy.

My lack of a smile worked better for me before I arrived in Vermont, as everybody I knew prized stoicism. Forced smiles signaled insincerity. If I was smiled at, it was because I told a funny joke or because someone thought I was cute, both of which rarely happened. My face is best described by the German word backpfeifengesicht, meaning a face that badly needs a fist.

However, upon my arrival in Vermont, everyone smiled at me. It was incredibly off-putting. For me, the street has always been a place of anonymity. Expanding my interactions with others beyond socially coded areas made me deeply uncomfortable. I often remarked to my parents that Vermonters were either the nicest or the fakest people I'd ever met; either way, they confused me.

I've maintained my apathy towards smiling for much of my time here. If you know me, even tangentially, you have probably experienced smiling at me only to be greeted by a blank face. There are only five people on campus with whom I willingly initiate small talk. Trust me, I was not trying to spite you or scare you. Think of me like a snake. Not only am I more scared of you than you are of me, but, like a snake, I have no idea how people work.

After a friend informed me that a good deal of her other friends agreed that I was "scary and mysterious," I decided that enough was enough. "Gage, you have a terrible case of resting bi**h face." To get the most out of Middlebury, I had to learn to embrace the fulcrum of Vermont social interaction: the fake smile. Maybe, I would even consider venturing into the realm of small talk — ask people how they are doing and walk away before they can answer.

At first, I refused to assimilate and reciprocate these behaviors. If you don't care how my day is going, don't ask. However, I have now begun to see Vermont's sociocultural quirks in a different light. The fake smile and the small talk are ways of validating that the other person deserves to be a part of our community. You aren't trying to deceive me. While I may be uncomfortable with the means of communication itself, I can get behind the underlying message. Nonetheless, I won't be taking the fake smile home. If I walked around my hometown smiling at people, antianxiety scripts would jump off the charts.

For those of you who have similar issues, there are things you can do to learn the way of the Vermonter. Practice your best friendly student impression, even if it isn't pretty in the beginning. Trust me; it won't be. My first attempt to fake a smile at a friend in Proctor resulted in them telling me something along the lines of, "wow, that was the scariest smile I've seen." Maybe think about getting a job that requires using your new tools. I became a tour guide. I should have been a terrible employee. At one point, my therapist prescribed that I sit in a mall food court for three hours — twice a month — to get over my agoraphobia. However, as with everything, you get better with time. I'm sure my first tour was a disaster; almost certainly, none of those kids applied to Middlebury. However, I've kept at it, and according to reviews, I actually come off as friendly and charismatic. For those of you who know me, I grant you full license to be shocked.

Middlebury, Vt. may very well be a microcosm of larger American culture. However, some social expectations, like the emphasis on the smile and small talk, are, in my experience, unique. I am only half joking when I say that I believe Vermonters, by birth or four-year indoctrination, are ruled by these cultural norms. Those of us who are unfamiliar with them need time to adapt. We need practice and coaching to read your social cues and send effective ones ourselves. We will learn to use your tools but need encouragement and help to do so. Give us some slack, but not too much.

Why Middlebury students need accessible fitness culture

Op-Ed

Eliot Nebolsine *is co-president of Uplift and a member of the class of 2025.5.*
Cecilia Caldwell *is a workout planner for Uplift and a member of the class of 2025.*

In a 2021 winter term independent study about fitness culture on campus, Professor of Anthropology Kristen Bright, Madison Lord '21 and Madeline Lyons '22 conducted extensive ethnographic research that consisted of in-depth interviews and mixed-media surveys. The study ultimately illustrated a clear message from students: 80% of students surveyed feel strongly that Middlebury has a need for a more inclusive fitness culture — and non-varsity athletes were eight times more likely to report significant feelings of intimidation in workout spaces at Middlebury.

The main reasons for feelings of intimidation included body insecurity, the presence of male sports teams in workout spaces, inexperience in the gym and a lack of social community. One respondent in the survey expressed that they would leave the athletic center if the lacrosse team was there. Another stated that they felt "a lot of body comparison since there is so little body diversity at Midd."

In addition, participants shared with the researchers the compounding effects of race, gender, class, athlete status and body image issues embedded within their workout experiences at Middlebury. There are constant barriers to entry to movement on campus, and the need for an intersectional, accessible and inclusive space for movement quickly became apparent. Another important theme that characterized these responses was the internalization of these struggles, as most students tended to place blame on their own insecurities rather than attributing them to larger structural and cultural factors.

For instance, one respondent noted that they felt like an imposter, saying, "I feel ashamed on the rare occasions I use workout spaces because I'm not in shape and everyone else is."

After identifying these barriers to movement on campus, Uplift was founded in 2021 with the following goals in mind: to create a new comprehensive movement platform that encourages and unifies a diverse group of students with aspirations to learn about metabolic movement and active lifestyles, to utilize the unique outdoor environment surrounding Middlebury College and to empower the individual with the skills and confidence to utilize the athletic center, enjoy other Middlebury resources and care for themselves independently on Middlebury's campus and beyond.

Fast forward to 2023, and Uplift continues working to make movement more accessible on campus. We offer a range of private fitness classes and lifting sessions ranging from introductory to advanced — all with the goal of offering comprehensive, full body workouts. We strive to provide students with a supportive, positive environment in which to get moving.

Uplift provides a space not only for movement but also a space to build a community. Uplift's co-president Eliot Nebolsine '25.5, for example, spent all of high school as a varsity athlete and felt lost coming to Middlebury suddenly being on the other side. She realized she didn't know just how scary going into a gym alone was and knew that she needed to find a group to be able to continue moving. Uplift has given her a community of people that make her feel supported, challenged and inspired. She is in constant awe of the group that has been built and is incredibly grateful to be able to take on more leadership this semester and see the club grow even more.

We recognize that Middlebury's fitness culture is often characterized by a competitive environment. One survey respondent noted that "not all exercise should be a competition and Midd needs more spaces that simply promote movement for movement's sake." In an effort to combat these feelings, Uplift held our second ever "Intro Week," in which we coordinated with other fitness clubs and organizations on campus that are often perceived to be inaccessible and intimidating in order to create more approachable spaces. We break everything down into easily understandable steps, from where to go, to what to bring, what to do, what to wear and everything in between. Our hope for these intro weeks is to expose students to Uplift and other wellness-minded organizations on campus — and to do so in a way that feels comfortable and supportive for everyone. Through running these intro weeks and collaborating so much with other clubs, we hope that we are able to connect people with the form of movement that feels best for them. While Uplift hosts a weekly lift, we recognize that may not be the preferred form of movement for everyone. Intro weeks are held in order to help open the door to all of the different opportunities here at Middlebury.

Uplift will continue throughout the spring, holding weekly lifts at 12 p.m. on Mondays at the Fritz balcony. You can connect with us through GroupMe (go/upliftgroupme) or you can follow us on Instagram @upliftmidd.

NEW MUSEUM EXHIBIT SHOWCASES AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

By GAGE SCHRIER
Contributing Writer

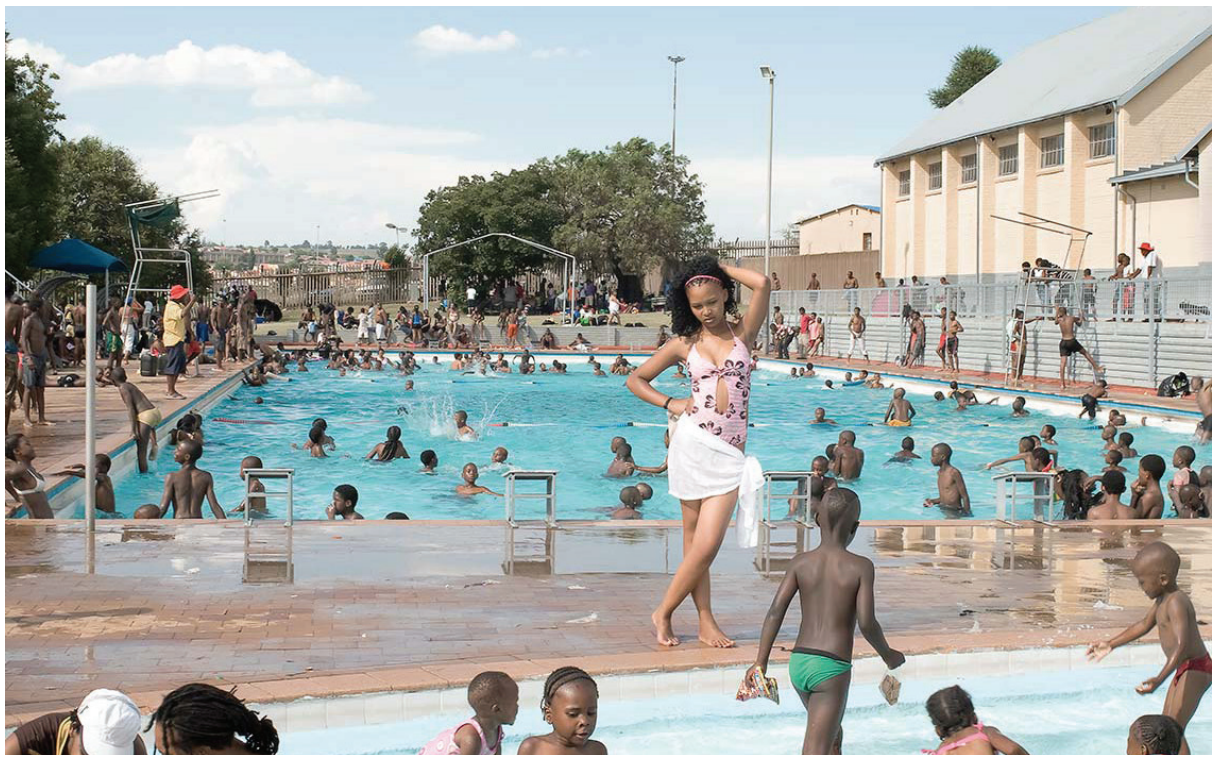
The Middlebury College Museum of Art opened its new exhibit, "Urban Cadence: Street Scenes from Lagos, Nigeria and Johannesburg, South Africa" on March 2. The traveling collection, on exhibition through the spring, consists of around 60 photographs and videos from nine different artists. Created by the Gund Gallery at Kenyon College and Touring Exhibitions of Contemporary Artists of Africa (TECAA), "Urban Cadence" challenges the viewer to explore Lagos and Johannesburg through stories that touch on migration, labor, desperation, success and the quickening speed of daily life as a result of widespread industrialization. The gallery is curated by Professor Carol Magee of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, but it is accompanied by historical context and music assembled by Middlebury faculty and students.

The show's opening was inaugurated with a cocktail hour and a short performance by the Middlebury Afro-pop Band. At the event, numerous speakers mentioned how the new exhibit fit into the museum's renewed effort to feature diverse creators and to increase the accessibility of the institution. During the installation and curation process, faculty specializing in African history and culture across departments were consulted to create labels for the pieces and design the displays.

The exhibit's theme focuses on the fast pace and the constantly-changing landscapes that define life in a rapidly-growing metropolis. The collection's six pieces by the South African photographer Jo Ratcliffe embody this motion perfectly. Her photographs confront the viewer with dizzying multi-exposure images of Johannesburg. The landscapes she photographs aptly visualize the wide-reaching influence of apartheid and constant migration. "The Fort, Constitutional Hill, Kotze St., HILLBROW" captures an apartheid-era prison alongside the constitutional court and an immigrant-heavy neighborhood that flanks it. Her work reminds audiences how numerous stories, including ones of migration, success and past oppression, can intertwine seamlessly in a cityscape.

Another featured artist, Kelechi Amadi-Obi, provides an upbeat, humorous angle to the exhibit. In the "Captain Rugged" series, Amadi-Obi's photographs portray a superhero, the alter ego of musician Keziah Jones, who, according to the exhibit's artist commentary, is, just as Batman is for Gotham,"for Lagos." Captain Rugged is seen posing on top of a batmobile-style car, an unfinished skyscraper and a minibus winding through residential neighborhoods. The photos are intensely saturated with color and chock-full of Superman references, conveying warmth and a sense of hope. However, Amadi-Obi's photographs, in combination with Jones' music, create something distinctly Lagosian: The hero's cape is decorated with a traditional Nigerian pattern and his music draws heavily from the city's unique subculture. The need for representative media, like the "Captain Rugged" series, is imparted by the exhibit's large informational posters. They remind the viewer that, due in part to a population boom, the need for art that speaks to the African experience is ever-growing. Johannesburg and Lagos, it says, "have more than doubled in population over the past two decades."

The exhibit, containing both unmistakable beauty and themes of demographic change, demands to be seen. Jaqueline Tran '24, a student monitor, notes that the museum is only now beginning to return to a pre-Covid-19 level of operation, but she hopes that the museum will soon begin bringing in a wider range of students. Hopefully, "Urban Cadence" will attract curiosity, bring the museum further toward its representation goals and increase the community's awareness of all that the museum has to offer.



Courtesy of Jodi Bieber, Displayed at the Middlebury Museum of Art

Courtesy of Kelechi Amadi-Obi, Displayed at the Middlebury Museum of Art

CHORAL CHAMELEON RETURNS TO ROBISON HALL

By JONATHAN EATON
Contributing Writer

Martin Chen/The Middlebury Campus

Choral Chameleon performing in Robison Hall on March 3.

The Choral Chameleon Ensemble blessed the Middlebury campus for the second time in the 103rd season of the Middlebury Performing Arts Series on March 3. Unlike Choral Chameleon's previous visit, there were no blindfolds or spiritual wind chimes to welcome audience members prior to the performance. Instead, Friday's concert focused on change and the human ability to weather challenges, like the recent pandemic.

"Change [is] just taking its time to work its way out within us — all good things. In recent years we have shown the strength of our character as human beings and as a species," Director Vince Peterson said.

Choral Chameleon is a semi-professional, co-ed choral ensemble directed by Peterson and based out of New York. In the week leading up to the performance, the Choral Chameleon Ensemble met with Middlebury music history classes and the college choir. The group also had a musical career conversation with students as part of the ensemble's music residency.

The concert opened with "Quoscumque Locos," a traditional choral piece sung in Latin, which transported the audience back to 15th-century England, with beautiful harmonies that enveloped the audience's souls.

Following the show's Middle Ages introduction, the group's performance of "The Door" by Andrew Maxfield brought audiences to the current century. The piece was upbeat and modern, contrasting the medieval harmonies of the previous number. It conveyed a message of embracing change and transition; the oscillating harmonies inspired the audience to reflect on their encounters and apprehensions with change.

A special full-circle moment occurred during the concert between Peterson and Ronnie Romano '20. Romano, interim director of the Middlebury Choir, was Peterson's student in high school. At this evening's concert, Romano accompanied the Choral Chameleon Ensemble on the piano during the 5th movement of "Les Chansons Des Roses," a piece about enduring change and weathering the hard times of winter. The song's baroque harmonies transformed Robison Hall into an 18th century French cathedral.

The next piece "Children of Eden" was slow and inspiring, like a melodic waltz or a psalm sung at a non-celebratory mass.

The ensemble also performed "Guest House" by Edward Thompson, a Middlebury Choir favorite. Peterson prefaced "Guest House" with a story about Thompson embracing change. The ensemble had their annual Sound Bath Concert at Thompson's parish, The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport, Conn., and one-week later Thompson had a stroke. After the stroke, Thompson told Peterson how happy he was that he had a stroke, reflecting on the words in Persian poet Rumi's "Guest House." Rumi writes that the body is a guest house and that we should "be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond." The piece was inspiring but intense with its magical chords and minor timber.

The next three pieces were more contemporary. "Pieces of My Heart" focused on reconnection while "Virtual Insanity" bathed the audience in smooth jazz reminiscent of Brazilian samba. The song was light-hearted and sounded like Electric Light Orchestra's "Mr. Blue Sky." The piece that followed, "Threads of Joy" was ethereal and magical.

The concert was topped off with a unique version of "Both Sides Now" by Joni Mitchell with a cacophonous and dissident section at the end, which Peterson used to humorously emphasize the danger of smoking to the audience. Mitchell originally recorded "Both Sides Now" in 1969 singing in the key of G major. However, after thirty years of smoking, she re-recorded the piece, but sang it a musical fourth below her original key. The ensemble's dissident section was meant to be Mitchell singing to her younger self.

In response to a resounding applause, the choir performed an encore of Whitney Houston's "I Want to Dance With Somebody," which was featured during their premier choral rave dance party last fall in New York City. The audience sprung to life with clapping and dancing when the chorus of the song arrived.

"It was so clear how much the group members trust each other and enjoy music together," audience member Kai Fukuda '23.5 said.

"I'm a big Joni Mitchell guy and thought the last two pieces were two crowd pleasers that hit the spot," said concert-goer Charlie Grossman '26.5.

Overall, this performance reverberated the importance of embracing change with a powerful selection of contemporary and traditional work. Middlebury College can consider itself lucky to have hosted the Choral Chameleon Ensemble twice this year.

AMERICAN HISTORY THROUGH FIVE GUITARS

By JOSHUA GLUCKSMAN
Contributing Writer

Vintage Martin Flat-top. Jazz Archtop. National resonator. Flat-top with DeArmond soundhole pickup. Solid-body Electric. These five pristine, glistening guitars stood still, entrancing the audience as the lights of the Robison Concert Hall in the Mahaney Arts Center slowly faded on March 3. Dozens of students, staff, faculty and community members sat silently as William Nash, professor of American studies and English, took center stage. Nash explained that this event, "An Evening with Paul Asbell," served a myriad of purposes. Not only was it a performance for the greater Middlebury community, but it also served a specific academic purpose: This semester, Nash is teaching an American studies class entitled "The Guitar in American Culture" for the second time. While there are plenty of pertinent readings, pictures and recordings, this performance offered a chance to hear a live guitar performance.

For Mark Christensen, concert hall technical director, this multipurpose event was exciting to take part in.

"Sometimes an event is clearly for the performer, like a recital, and sometimes clearly for the audience, like a concert, so this event, being for a class, for Paul [Asbell] and for the crowd, is really cool," Christensen said.

The next hour and a half was a five-phase lecture performance where Asbell expounded on the history of guitars in America. He started with the flat-top and songs from the early 1900s like Henry Thomas' "Fishin' Blues." He then discussed the archtop for Don Redman's "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You," before moving to Depression-era blues played on a National Trovador like Tampa Red's "You Can't Get That Stuff No More." The lecture concluded with Asbell on the electric guitar, showcasing the contemporary sound of Jimi Hendrix. Asbell even mixed in some of his own original work, inspired by the artists he has listened to and worked with over the years.

Throughout the performance, it was made clear that studying the guitar can be a powerful conduit to teach about the history of the United States. For instance, Asbell explained that the third guitar, the National resonator, came out in the 1920s right before the Great Depression. The unfortunate timing made the model unaffordable for the average American. The lack of access to certain guitars, such as the National resonator, and other instruments during this time in history both gave way to new genres of music, a result of many musicians resorting to less expensive instruments, and showcased the way that economic realities have shaped music history. Another example Nash offered on the same theme was how industrialization affected the history of music.

"Guitar making after the industrial revolution really changed as some companies began using machines and mass-producing guitars. So we have to ask, what was gained with uniformity of production and what was lost with less handcrafting?" Nash said.

Asbell made an interesting point toward the end of his performance that the esoteric guitar references and trivia will probably be appreciated by two or three "guitar nerds" in the crowd. Surveying the body language of the audience members over the course of the performance, there indeed emerged two standout figures: a father and son who consistently nodded to the guitar history references and sang along to the early 20th-century blues lyrics. Jared Ahern '25 was the student in question, sitting next to his father Timmy Ahern — who had driven five hours from Brooklyn just to watch Asbell perform. For Jared, the concert was emotional in its own right, and he spoke to a universal feeling that guitar invokes.

Courtesy Photo

Paul Asbell lectured and performed at Middlebury College on March 3.

"Blues is one of the most fundamental modes of human expression, and, yes, while it is rooted in sorrow, all other genres of music are derived from this raw emotion," Jared Ahern said.

As the performance concluded, Asbell lingered to sell copies of his CDs and to answer more questions from guitar enthusiasts. Not only had Asbell's music and life experience helped young artists like Jared Ahern, delighted the ears of many Middlebury residents, and inspired the academic work of Nash and his students, but it also serves as a reminder that the history of music and musical instruments can profoundly impact and inform the history of a nation.

As the event wrapped up and Asbell was packing away his guitars, I asked him a personal question about this history and whether he feels that the academic study of guitar sanitizes and flattens the magical, more transcendent qualities of music that perhaps cannot be studied. In essence, I wanted to hear from Asbell if he thought music should be listened to or studied.

"I don't see it as being either/or," he said. "Academia shouldn't be soulless, and the fact that it is is someone's fault. If it turns everything dull, it is not serving what should be its main purpose: to inspire."

EONS

By EDYTH MOLDOW
Staff Writer

My world exists in motion
Legs a swirl of movement, seeping into the wavering ground
Gripping air that shakes and eddies
Whirlpool lips and eyes

Here I feel a different existence
One tethered to stillness—to
Open-mouth sharp, cool breath (gentle graze)
Of the wind is truly unmovable

Where leaves live entire lifetimes
In covering a floor
Bark and tree stumps lost their velvet drapes
But their eons exist in stable
Idle, stalling, being

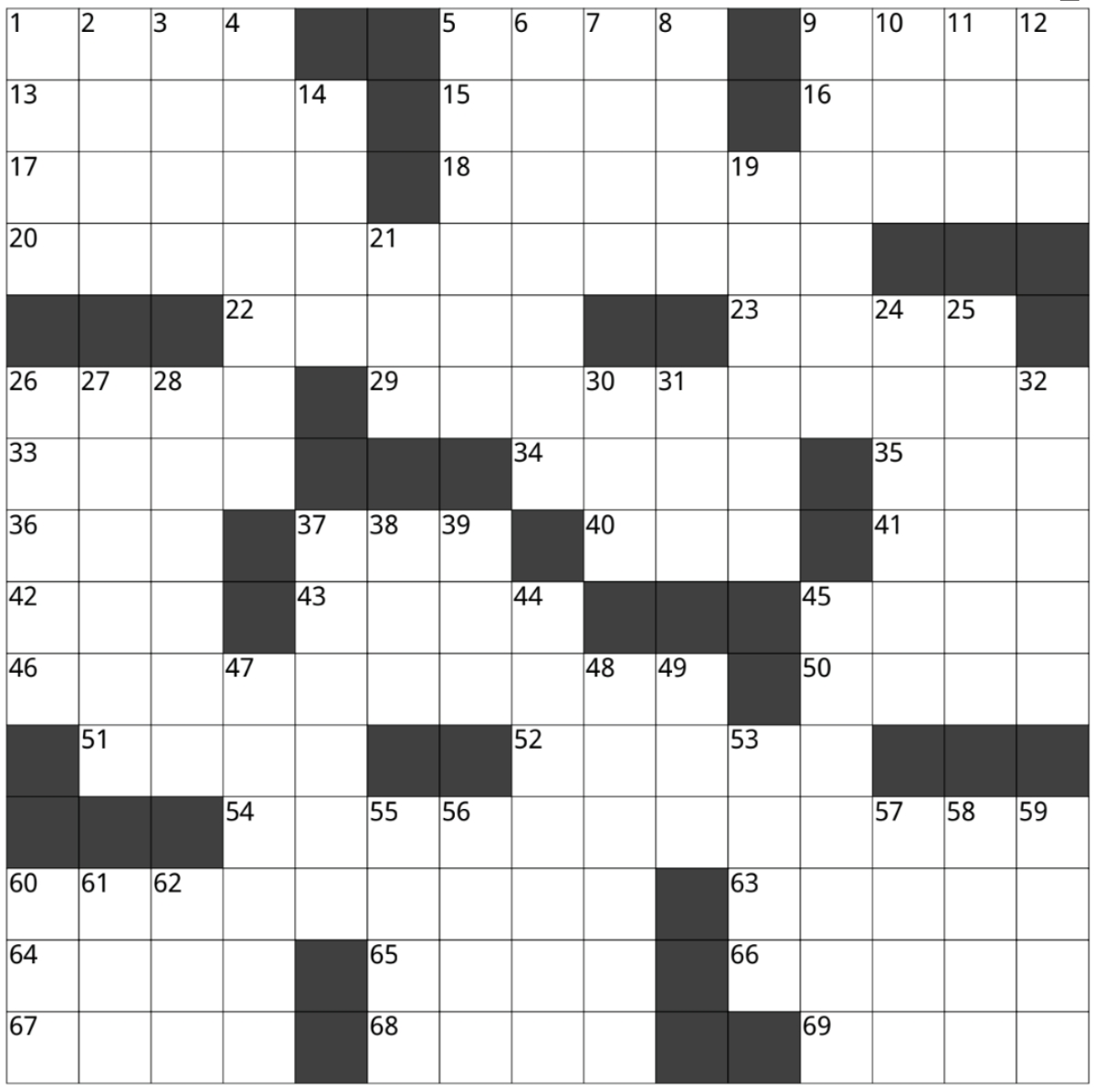
Earth is arranged the way my brain is not
Our world is not—ours is curtains
Closing and opening, beeping monitors, rolling
Wheels, is metal conversations, clanking
On their way down a running faucet or into a bed pan

Images running as fast as they can so
Colors don't smear on a screen
Demanding attention

This forest asks for none.

CROSSWORD FOR YOU!!!

By JOSH HARKINS
Puzzle Master



Across

1 WWII island Iwo ___
5 D.C. baseball players
9 Bob Dole's running mate Jack,
13 NCAA's huskies (2014)
15 Garfield's dog pal
16 ___ Spring, protest movement in the Middle East and North Africa
17 Italian sweet
18 Mounted gentlemen (2019)
20 Host of the most men's 54-Across Final Fours since 1980
22 ___ & Young (accountants)
23 Sporty Spice, for short
26 Impose ___ on
29 Sandwich or avocado toast component
33 Speed (away)
34 Bridgerton inspiration "The ___ and I" (2015)
35 Hosp. scan
36 Reuben end
37 Col. Sanders joint
40 Asian peninsula split by two countries, abbr.
41 Chapel Hill sch. (2017)
42 Gymnast Raisman
43 Slightly
45 "Rats!"
46 Farewells at bed time
50 Majorca, por ejemplo
51 Regrets
52 Dog-___, as some pages
54 Tournament whose participants will be selected this Sunday
60 Cares about
63 "Have your cake and eat ___"
64 Opera solo
65 Documentary science show from 12-Down (2016, 2018)
66 Get rid of
67 Lean
68 Singer Stefani
69 Bears in Barcelona

Down

1 Dame Dench
2 Legend
3 Possible outcome of a damp environment
4 Old as time
5 Card-only
6 Positively changed
7 Early DVR company
8 Singer of "Kiss From A Rose"
9 Type of bread roll
10 Poetic preposition
11 Harm
12 Sesame Street home
14 Close
19 "___ up" (get loose)
21 Compass heading, not a Hitchcock thriller; for short
24 Madagascar primates
25 Lustful
26 "What ___!" (bummer)
27 Lakers legend Elgin (2021)
28 Words before serious or ready
30 Puffin-like bird
31 Ref's decision, in boxing
32 Pronouncements
37 Where to find Topeka (2022)
38 Agency with 56 field offices in the U.S.
39 Smokers choice, for short
44 Home of the Charlotte Hornets, familiarly
45 Stayed home
47 Put down
48 Lightning or Buccaneer fan
49 Mrs., in Madrid
53 Actress Falco
55 Called
56 What one might eat in defeat
57 French summers
58 Okay, not great
59 Drunkards
60 Actress Gadot
61 Wrath
62 By way of

REEL CRITIC: "TÁR"

By JACK TORPEY
Arts & Culture Editor

Courtesy photo
"Tár" was realeased on Oct. 27, 2022.

At the 2023 New York Film Critics Circle Awards, Martin Scorsese made one of his regular pronouncements on the state of cinema when he presented writer-director Todd Field with the Circle's Best Film award. "The clouds lifted when I experienced Todd's film, 'Tár,'" Scorsese said. Referencing an earlier comment in which he asserted that the cinematic art form has fallen upon "dark days," Scorsese's statement is based on his conviction that modern films are guilty of babying the audience, ferrying them through narratives beat by beat without leaving any space for individual viewers to form unique attachments to a film. "Tár," he claims, does not do this, a refusal to coddle that grants the film its salvational status for an embittered cinema devotee like himself. Does Scorsese, who once likened Marvel movies to theme parks, have a point this time? That depends on whether you accept the notion that expertly dealing in ambiguity, even at the price of emotionally distancing its audience, makes "Tár" ideal cinema.

Despite widespread confusion that its titular character is a real-life figure, Field's film tells the wholly fictional story of Lydia Tár (Cate Blanchett), a brilliant and world-renowned musician who has achieved the distinction of being the first female conductor of the prestigious Berlin Philharmonic. In the film's opening scene, Tár takes the stage before a packed auditorium to be interviewed for a profile in The New Yorker. It is reasonable to assume that as the moderator reads her illustrious resume and questions her on her process as a conductor, and Tár responds with poise and intelligence, those in the crowd must perceive the woman's station in life as dangerously enviable. But for any discerning attendees paying close attention to Tár, a barely perceptible wince at a harmless joke made by the moderator at her expense suggests something upsetting dwelling beneath the veneer of her accomplishments. This latent darkness is what "Tár" digs at throughout its nearly 160-minute runtime, raising issues of abuse, corrupting power and the thin line between genius and insanity to the surface of this uniquely 21st-century psychodrama.

The film is certainly one of the chillier contestants in this year's best picture race. Dismissing even the faintest trace of melodrama, Todd constructs a narrative out of ordinary events in the life of an eminent composer-conductor. There are interviews, rehearsals, classroom lessons and even scenes of Tár jogging and driving her daughter to school. Most of these scenes are lengthy and dialogue-intensive, and all of them are shot primarily with a static camera and feature little to none of Hildur Guðnadóttir's original score. The result of such a minimalist approach by Field is that his film never raises the heart rate like a more narratively adventurous or emotionally direct movie likely would. This is not to say that "Tár" is dull. The coolly filmed, seemingly unremarkable scenes of Tár going about her life that make the film feel aloof are also what make it so rife with tension. Knowing that something is not quite right with Tár, we observe each of her daily interactions with the anxious expectation for her to break the tranquility of the scene and shatter her pristine public persona. Field's unflinching camera, restrained use of music and staunch refusal to provide easy answers about his protagonist deepen this anxiety, and as the film progresses, he suspends us in an exciting state of anticipation.

This isn't really Todd Field's film, though. He may have the producing, writing and directing credits, but if people are still talking about "Tár" in twenty years, it will be because of the lead performance by Cate Blanchett. She is absolutely commanding as an enigmatic titan of classical music. Certain flourishes, such as the nervous tics she exhibits before taking the stage, have likely already secured her Oscars gold. But for most of the film, it is nothing more than simply speaking that solidifies Blanchett's performance as a great one. Field's script is exceedingly articulate, and Blanchett delivers her sprawling passages of dialogue so smoothly and with such confidence in her words that she elevates Tár to an unarguable position of power. The actress conveys her character's dominance most memorably in an early scene that finds Tár engaged in a one-sided argument with a student over the merits of Bach. With irrefutable logic and piercing wit, she mercilessly deconstructs the student's qualms about the famed German composer, a verbal takedown that strands us somewhere between pitying the student and bursting into applause for Blanchett.

Take her performance, add to it a tense atmosphere and an unpredictable storyline, and does the sum make "Tár" the burst of cinematic sunshine that Scorsese says it is? Not really. It's a challenging, mostly entertaining movie, and the "Goodfellas" director is right to champion it in hopes of earning it a wider audience. But 2022 gave us "Top Gun: Maverick," "All Quiet on the Western Front," "The Batman," "The Fabelmans" and "The Banshees of Inisherin" to name a few. If that's a year of "dark days" for cinema, we're going to need something brighter than "Tár" to save it.

MIDDLEBURY FALLS TO NICHOLS COLLEGE IN SECOND REBOUND OF NCAA TOURNAMENT

By JOSH ROSENSTEIN
Staff Writer

The men's basketball team lost to Nichols College 73–66 in the second round of the NCAA Division III Championships this past Saturday.

Middlebury hosted the first two rounds of the tournament at Pepin Gymnasium, after earning an at-large bid to the tournament. The team posted an impressive 20–6 season that led media outlets to rank them as a top 10 team in the country for the majority of the season.

Middlebury's time in the tournament started fantastically. Middlebury beat Worcester State 76–51 in the round of 64 on Friday, March 3. The Lancers could not miss in the first half and entered the break up four points. After the halftime intermission, the script flipped, as the Panthers rained in a barrage of three pointers, tallying 50 points in the second half and leading to a resounding win. NESCAC Player and Defensive Player of the Year Alex Sobel '23, led Middlebury scorers with 18 points but got help from Noah Osher '23.5 who poured in 17 points of his own. David Brennan '24.5 was the unsung hero of the game, playing imposing defense and securing five offensive rebounds to help give the Panthers extra possessions on offense.

However, the Panthers' success in the Division III "Big Dance" was short-lived. On Saturday, Middlebury matched up with Nichols College, who beat the University of Rochester a day prior. The Panthers controlled the majority of the first half, but a sloppy finish for Middlebury allowed

Nichols to creep back into the game and go into halftime with a two-point lead. Sobel was in foul trouble early in the first half, and Middlebury evidently missed his rim protection on defense, as several Nichols players scored at ease close to the hoop. The second half saw both teams neck-in-neck, but the Panthers struggled to make three pointers, which hampered their comeback attempts.

Despite the bitter loss, the Panthers' tenacity and grit on the court showed why they were one of the best teams in Division III all year. Fans attending the game could not help but admire the team's energy and toughness.

"Middlebury played well, and it was fun to be part of the energy the crowd brought," said Cyrus Perkinson '25, a student who attended the game.

As far as crowd energy, Captain Rudolph '23.5 consistently brought endless passion for his beloved Panthers. He led the student section in several chants that supported the players and applauded great plays.

"I was really happy to be at the games, and I could feel that when the crowd was into it, it motivated the players more," Rudolph said. "What I like to do is get chants going and get people on their feet because it makes the entire atmosphere better for players and fans alike."

Although the loss stung for the fans and the team, the electric atmosphere at the games bore witness to the passion for Middlebury sports around campus.

Courtesy of Will Costello

Thomas Zodda '22.53 drives to the basket in Middlebury's 76–51 win over Worcester State.

Middlebury Football welcomes new leadership

By SARAH FURTADO
Journalism Fellow

Middlebury's football team is entering a new season of leadership — one that strives to work in cooperation to ensure a successful season.

New head football coach, Doug Mandigo '96, has been a part of the football coaching team since 2011 as the defensive coordinator and linebacker's coach, and stepped into his new position in December of 2022. He weighed in on what coaching means to him, and why he decided to come back to his alma mater.

"Coaching is teaching, it's building relationships. It's motivating. It's mentoring. You build real lasting relationships with players and colleagues. That's why I do it," Mandigo said in an interview with The Campus. "I like the competition, but I like the relationships, and the people I coach, and the people I work with. That's the best part of it."

Middlebury's football team also named a new offensive coordinator, Jason Thomas. Thomas previously coached for Middlebury during the 2006–07 season, and returned in 2021 as an outside linebackers coach. To him, coaching is about giving back to the sport.

"I see it as a tremendous opportunity to be a mentor to young people, to help them polish off who they are before we send them out into the real world," he said. "There's lots of lessons through sports, but football, in particular, that you can teach, as long as it's intentional, and it's my way to pay service to the game and help out some young people."

The two hope to make the leadership transition as seamless as possible, while still keeping the precedents set by previous head coach, Bob Ritter '84.

"My goal for myself in this position is to really streamline and continue to do what we've been doing. I think being put into this position offers a lot of continuity within the staff, and I think staff continuity is important for teams," Thomas said. "We have a pretty veteran group coming back, and my goal is to make sure that it is as seamless a transition for them as possible."

Though the football team is currently in its off-season, both coaches and players are excited for what's in store for the fall.

"We have a really good core group of guys coming back to our program that did well last year. And then another great group of kids that have come in that really want to be here. I really love the program and the campus and the school," Mandigo said. "As usual, they will do a fantastic job of welcoming the new players to the program next year. We have a history of that — of a culture of welcoming our new guys with open arms and into our brotherhood and family."

Wide receiver Donovan Wood '24 is also hopeful for the upcoming season and the future of the team.

"For me, being on the team means more than just an athletic obligation, it feels like a family first and foremost with a group of guys that I'd be happy to call my brothers," Wood said. "I share the sentiment with the majority of our team that we are excited for both Coach Mandigo's new position as head coach and the official acquisition of Coach Thomas." He is excited to both return to the team next fall with familiar friends and welcome a group of new first-year players.

Going into the fall football season, teamwork and dedication are a must. As such, both the players and coaches look forward to working together to ensure the ultimate success of the team, not just for the upcoming fall season, but in the years to come.

Baseball kicks off their season with trip to Alabama

By ETHAN VASHEL
Contributing Writer

The Middlebury baseball team opened their 2023 season on March 4 in Montgomery, Ala. at a tournament hosted by Huntingdon College. The team went 1–2 in their play during the tournament.

Starting this past Saturday, Middlebury lost 9–6 to Millsaps College and 16–12 to Huntingdon College. However, on Sunday, the team rebounded with a 13–0 win over Hampden-Sydney College, which marked Head Coach Mike Leonard's 100th career win at Middlebury.

The Panthers' three opponents went into their contests having already played several games this season. However, because cold weather makes Forbes Field inhospitable for baseball until about April, Middlebury's only game action has been a scrimmage with Castleton in the confines of Virtue Field House. Transitioning from tracking baseballs in the dim lighting of Virtue Field House to an outdoor setting presents early season difficulties for Middlebury batters.

"The biggest challenge going into these games is that [opponents] already played a couple, but then again they know very little about us," said First Baseman Mitchell Schroeder '23, "But it is also so nice to finally be able to cheer for your teammates instead of competing against them every day in practice. It's nice to take that competitive edge out on a different colored jersey."

Courtesy of Bryan Klabik

Justin Lessing '25 threw five scoreless innings in Middlebury's 13–0 win over Hampden-Sydney College.

The immediate obstacles Vermont winters placed on Middlebury baseball were overcome with soaring success in the 2022 season; Middlebury recorded its best season in program history. The team set school records in wins (31), games played (45), hits (522), runs (426), home run (65), Runs Batted In (388), stolen bases (177) and strikeouts of opposing hitters (400). The Panthers led the NESCAC in every major offensive category by large margins, with many great individual seasons.

Catcher John Collins '23 smashed a school record with 14 home runs and had a single season hit total of 59, the second best in school history. Outfielder Beau Root '24 was not far behind Collins with 56 hits and 28 stolen bases. Schroeder hit to a .483 batting average with a league best 14 doubles. Offensive NESCAC Player of the Year Alec Ritch '23 set single season school records in runs, RBI, walks and stolen bases. Ritch — channeling Los Angeles Angels two-way superstar Shohei Ohtani — also went 5–0 on the mound, recording 41 strikeouts through 53 innings.

Coach Leonard faces a difficult task penciling in the starting lineup each game, and that is not because of a lack of fire power. He simply has an endless arsenal of hitters.

Overall, Middlebury sits in a great position to repeat their success on the baseball diamond. The team graduated zero positional players in 2022.

"When I tell people at Middlebury I play baseball, they always kinda laugh and say they always see us hitting in the field house. I think that's one of the reasons I wanted to play ball at Middlebury and the reason I love showing up every day. The guys around me just love to work," Schroeder said.

Despite the tremendous 2022 offensive effort, the pitching lagged behind the offense. Middlebury posted a team ERA of 5.75, which ranked them fourth in the NESCAC. A couple of the returning standouts include senior Alex Price '23, who worked to a 3.50 ERA with a school single-season record of 85 strikeouts, and Cole Crider '23.5, whose 2.45 ERA led the team last season, but the team hopes that their pitching staff will continue to improve.

"A plethora of young arms had big offseasons for us. Guys who have a little bit of experience under their belts from last year are ready to have breakout years," Schroeder said.

Already, the team has seen impressive pitching as Justin Lessing '25 threw five scoreless innings in the team's win against Hampden-Sydney.

The team's season continues with this weekend's doubleheader as they play Swarthmore College on Saturday and Bard College on Sunday.

PFL Weekly

By BLAISE SIEFER, ELI DIBARI, MARCO FENGLER, CAPTAIN RUDOLPH
Podcast Hosts

This week, PFL spotlights the men's basketball NESCAC Player of the Year, Alex Sobel '23. Plus, a first-year Panther headed to NCAAs for the pentathlon? You won't want to miss this week's trivia! After hitting his Marco guarantee last week, Marco drops what might be his boldest one yet. Eli sends us all the way to Alabama for his Panther of the Week, and Captain talks about the NCAA women's hockey game this past Wednesday.

Caroline Harding